

Dr Beata Byczko

Dr Byczko answers the Proust Questionnaire to share a little about herself with *BCMJ* readers.



Where do you live?

I'm a family physician in Vancouver and have worked in community practice for many years. My practice is focused on sexual and reproductive health. I've been the medical director of an abortion clinic for 20 years.

What profession might you have pursued, if not medicine?

As a child I wanted to become a film director to showcase the injustices wielded upon me by unfair schoolteachers, the Communist regime, etc. Realistically, I would have become a microbiologist.

Which talent would you most like to have?

If I must limit myself to just one wish, it would be to have effortless conflict resolution skills.

Any BC physician is welcome to submit a Proust Questionnaire. Complete the questionnaire online at www.bcmj.org/submit-proust-questionnaire.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

I appreciate the focus and determination I had as an adolescent; this facilitated my adjustment to a new country, culture, and language and catapulted me all the way through university and medical school.

Who are your heroes?

Those who speak truth to power, like Jody Wilson-Raybould, Greta Thunberg, Malala Yousafzai, and Ai Weiwei.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

Deep practice during my annual yoga retreat: senses awake, mind clear, heart open. Done in a community of like-minded friends, it is profoundly restorative and rejuvenating. Alternatively, skiing 7th Heaven on Blackcomb on a bluebird day with friends.

What is your greatest fear?

Personally, becoming debilitated by incurable illness and losing my autonomy. Professionally, the spread of fanaticism and misinformation leading to loss of reproductive freedom in Canada.

What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?

I'd like to be less risk averse and cautious in pursuing the true desires of my heart. So, you could say cowardice.

Which living physician do you most admire?

Those physicians and health care workers who strive for excellence and continue to provide care in armed conflict and disaster zones, showing up again and again despite their own difficulties.

What is your favorite activity?

Yoga retreat—the longer the better. “When the soul lies down in that grass the world is too full to talk about.”—Rumi.

On what occasion do you lie?

Rarely; to avoid hurting another person's feelings (if the situation is banal enough that a little white lie won't really matter).

What is your favorite place?

Pristine nature, even during inclement weather. Sometimes actually despite it. Long Beach in Tofino.

What medical advance do you most anticipate?

Effective, reversible male contraception. Surely, we should have had it long ago.

What is your most marked characteristic?

Balance: left/right (I'm ambidextrous), intuitive/logical, spontaneous/organized, creative/analytical.

What do you most value in your colleagues?

Emotional intelligence and well-honed communication skills. When these are in place, the synergy of collaboration and a sense of belonging become an inherent part of team dynamics. Luckily, I work with colleagues who embody these qualities.

What are your favorite books?

Too many to name every one. *The Books of Jacob* by Olga Tokarczuk. *The Body Keeps the Score* by Bessel van der Kolk. *The Luminaries* by Eleanor Catton. Anything by Michael Ondaatje, Rumi, Pablo Neruda, and e.e. cummings.

What is your greatest regret?

The loss of connection with old friends that happens over time and space as we move along our lives' trajectories.

What is the proudest moment of your career?

Getting the clinic through the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC's Non-Hospital Medical and Surgical Facilities accreditation program every 4 years.

What is your motto?

"Compassion is the keen awareness of the interdependence of all things." –Thomas Merton

How would you like to die?

Swiftly, peacefully, and surrounded by love. Preferably at the end of a very long life and with a full sensorium, to better appreciate stepping through the veil. ■

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