

Obituaries

We welcome original tributes of less than 700 words; we may edit them for clarity and length. Obituaries may be emailed to journal@doctorsofbc.ca. Include birth and death dates, full name and name deceased was best known by, key hospital and professional affiliations, relevant biographical data, and a high-resolution head-and-shoulders photo.



Dr Robert Alan Hewko
1953–2023

Dr Rob Hewko, a well-loved clinical professor in the University of British Columbia's Department of Psychiatry and the former medical lead for the consultation-liaison service at Vancouver General and UBC Hospitals, passed away in December 2023. He leaves behind an extraordinary legacy of dedication to clinical service, education, and leadership in medical psychiatry.

For more than 30 years he roamed the wards at VGH, finding solutions to arcane patient puzzles, using what he called a biopsychosocial model. Over the years his focus was on delirium, pain, addiction, pseudo-seizures, and other clinical problems that high-tech modern medicine all too often minimizes or ignores. His calm demeanor reassured patients who were often amazed to discover a physician who not only listened but was also able to help. Rob never

ignored ostensibly minor details and was meticulous about taking a proper history. It didn't hurt that he had a near-eidetic memory and an encyclopedic medical knowledge, remembering some rare disease he had read about only once in medical school. He spent countless hours explaining to residents, nurses, families, patients, and anyone within earshot how and why some condition had evolved and why it was essential to understand the underlying mechanism(s) and epistemology. Nursing staff appreciated his support, and students of all stripes flocked to his many lectures and talks, where the usual PowerPoint slides were interspersed with colorful, often funny, clinical anecdotes.

His liaison with the American Academy of Psychosomatic Medicine (now the Academy of Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry) began long before anyone in BC had even heard of it; this allowed him to bring international standards of care to VGH, which spread across the province through hundreds of trainees and colleagues. He was especially proud of teaching off-service residents who could bring a higher standard of care for conditions like delirium back to their own disciplines. Within consultation-liaison psychiatry, Rob carved out new clinical fields, such as innovative approaches to managing pain and addiction in a model that continues to be followed today.

Many awards and accolades were thrown his way, the most recent being the BC Psychiatric Association's Distinguished Contribution to Psychiatry award, but overall, Rob was more interested in clinical work and never lost sight of the vulnerable, ill

person at the centre of it. His sharp intellect, medical acumen, and deep understanding of pharmacology (which he ascribed to his undergraduate work in biochemistry) not only resulted in exemplary patient care but also expanded the clinical role of hospital psychiatry beyond its traditional borders as he set the gold standard for consultation-liaison psychiatry in BC and beyond. He will be missed.

—Susan Baxter

Vancouver

—Jesse Sidhu, MD

Vancouver



British Columbia Medical Journal
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Chasing a moving train: The general surgery workforce versus population growth in British Columbia, 2012–2022

Due to population growth and aging, the deficit in the number of full-time-equivalent surgeons in BC increased from 74 to 105 between 2012 and 2022.

Read the article: bcmj.org/articles/chasing-moving-train-general-surgery-workforce-versus-population-growth-british-columbia



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