

**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](mailto: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 Moira Mowa Yeung**  
1939–2024

Dr Moira Mowa Yeung passed away on 6 September 2024 in Vancouver. She was born in 1939 in Hong Kong and entered the medical faculty of the University of Hong Kong in 1957 with a King Edward VII Scholarship, graduating in 1962 with no less than seven gold medals. Following an internship, she obtained a Commonwealth Scholarship to study in the UK, qualifying as a specialist in internal medicine and respiratory. During that time, she worked at the Royal Brompton Hospital with the great Dr Jack Pepys, arguably the father of clinical immunology in England. It was there that she married her husband, David.

Political unrest in Hong Kong prompted Moira's passage to Vancouver in 1968, where she set about relicensing and eventually joined the Division of Respiratory Medicine at Vancouver General Hospital. There, she began to pursue her academic research interests, eventually establishing the Occupational and Environmental Disease unit at VGH, which bears her name today. She was one of only two female respirologists in BC at the time.

Perhaps influenced by Dr Pepys, her research focused on occupational asthma, specifically western red cedar asthma, which was a common disease among sawmill workers in BC. She went on to discover that plicatic acid was the chemical compound responsible, that patients remain symptomatic even after stopping working with the wood, and that this could lead to permanent respiratory disability. She worked tirelessly on behalf of her patients to have occupational asthma recognized as a compensable disease and to have permanent disability benefits available to those who failed to recover despite removal from the triggering agent. She achieved this first in Canada and later throughout North America, a monumental accomplishment. Moira's work led to international recognition, with the Alice Hamilton Award for Major and Lasting Contribution in Occupational Health from the American Industrial Hygiene Association in 2000 and the prestigious Distinguished Achievement Award from the American Thoracic Society in 2008. She published no less than 400 peer-reviewed scientific journal articles and chapters in several books.

The later years of her career, from 1999 to 2019, were spent between Vancouver and Hong Kong, where she was appointed honorary professor at the University of Hong Kong. During her time there, she wrote a four-volume medical history of Hong Kong and went on to write biographies of several prominent Hong Kong residents who contributed to the scientific and cultural life of her birthplace.

I met Moira in 1978, when I arrived in Vancouver for a fellowship in respiratory medicine. She became my mentor, colleague, friend, and, laterally, my patient. Her later years were very challenging for

her medically, but it by no means slowed her down. Several weeks before she passed away, she circulated a detailed description of how and where her memorial service would be conducted, including the passages to be read, musical accompaniments, her requested speakers, and the order in which they would give their contributions. This, I should add, was managed despite being in the throes of terminal metastatic lung cancer. At no time did I hear her rail against the many slings and arrows that fate had sent her way. On the contrary, several times she expressed gratitude for the life she had led, which she considered privileged and blessed.

Anyone who met Moira would be instantly aware of her calm presence, her air of dignity, and the quiet confidence that emanated from her. Her accompanying photo shows her wonderful smile, which was never far from the surface, as was her easily triggered laughter. The flags on the University of British Columbia campus were lowered to half-mast to honor her, a fitting tribute to this gifted physician.

She is survived by her husband of 53 years, David, and her children, Jennifer and Mark. The motto of my school was *et velle et perficere*, "both to aim and to achieve." This remarkable woman did just that, and then some.

*Requiescat in pace.*

—Kevin Elwood, MD  
Vancouver



**Dr Gerald Kenefick**  
1944–2024

Dr Gerald (Gerry) Kenefick is survived by wife, Sandy; daughters, Victoria, Lisa (Serge), and Alexandra; grandchildren, Grace, Rory, Sophia, and Oliver; sisters, Jackie (Simon) and Anne (Frank); and many nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his brother, Finbar.

Gerry immigrated to Canada from Cork, Ireland, in 1969 and landed in Victoria for a year of internal medicine. He then moved to Vancouver to take up a residency in obstetrics/gynecology and spent 2 years at BC Women’s Hospital and Health Centre (then Grace Hospital) and St. Paul’s Hospital. Looking for work–life balance, he stayed in general practice for the remainder of his medical career.

Gerry obtained his certification in family practice and was awarded a fellowship by the College of Family Physicians of Canada in 1989.

He held positions on many of the executive boards of Royal Columbian and St. Mary’s Hospitals in New Westminster, including chief of general practice at both hospitals.

In 1980, Gerry was hired at Telus as its medical officer and remained there for 4 years. When he left Telus, he went back into family practice and obtained his certification in occupational medicine, practising in Burnaby, with an added office for occupational medicine, along with three travel vaccination clinics in the Lower

Mainland, which he worked in tandem with his colleague Dr G. Parhar.

Throughout his life, his passions were sailing and sailboat racing, along with building model ships and aircraft, which he especially loved during retirement. Gerry joined the Royal Cork Yacht Club in Ireland at age 12 and kept his overseas membership until his passing. He was their longest-standing member (67 years).

—Gurdeep Parhar, MD  
Vancouver



**Dr John Whelan**  
1943–2024

The psychiatry community in Vancouver lost one of its treasures with the passing of Dr John Whelan in April 2024. John succumbed to ALS in hospice care, surrounded by the love of his life, Dell, and his beloved daughters, Ciara and Julie.

John was born in Galway, Ireland, and came to Vancouver in 1969 for his residency in psychiatry at the University of British Columbia. He had a private practice in Vancouver and established the psychiatric day hospital at the old St. Vincent’s Hospital. He is best known, though, as a pillar of the psychiatry consultation service at Vancouver General Hospital.

Consultation psychiatry brings the psychiatrist into the busy medical and surgical wards of our hospitals. It brings mental health expertise to the challenges staff and patients face in those settings.

John was a unique human being. He was calm, soft-spoken, and a superb listener. His advice to residents was always “Sit down with the patient. Don’t be in a hurry. If you listen very carefully to their story, you will get your diagnosis.”

John’s gentle approach was also powerfully therapeutic, a balm for patients and staff alike. Modern medicine tends to operate on the notion that medical treatment means pharmaceutical or surgical intervention. John taught us that a physician’s very personhood can be a potent force for healing.

John will be missed, but his legacy continues in the work being done by the trainees who were exposed to his remarkable example of humanity.

I feel very blessed to have known John.  
—Bruce Patterson, MD  
Vancouver

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