

Unsung Heroes of Canadian Urology

This will be the first of a series of articles to focus on Canadian urologists who made significant contributions to our field, but in my view were not adequately acknowledged in their lifetime.

The first individual to be highlighted is Dr. John Paul Whelan. Paul was a graduate of McMaster Medical School (1981) and then went on to Urological residency at Western University. After stone fellowships at the Universities of Florida and Pennsylvania, Paul returned to McMaster in 1988 as an Assistant Professor in the Division of Urology. When he arrived in Hamilton, there was no Urology training program, but Paul soon remedied that. He spearheaded a drive to establish a training program in 1999, with the able assistance of the late Dr. Anil Kapoor and Dr. Kevin Piercey. The McMaster Urology Training Program was accredited by the Royal College in 2001, and Paul became its first Program Director. He also represented McMaster on the Royal College Exam Committee during this time.

Paul did not just establish himself as a leader in medical education, he also contributed to patient care and research. He was an early pioneer in minimally invasive urological surgery, an area in which McMaster has continued to excel. He was also instrumental in the fund raising which helped to establish the McMaster Institute of Urology, based at St. Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton. I had the opportunity to tour this facility and was impressed by this well-equipped complex from which the urologists ran their practices. The Institute also has a role in fund raising for Urological research to advance future patient care.

Having established a legacy in Hamilton, Paul felt the need to move on and relocated to Victoria BC in 2013. There he assumed the position of Executive Medical Director of Vancouver Island Health Surgical Program. Paul was credited with positively transforming the surgical program during his tenure. In the summer of 2018, Paul was diagnosed with a brain tumour. However, he continued his good work by allowing his medical story to be featured in a fund-raising effort for the Victoria Hospitals Foundation. Paul passed away on June 29, 2019, at 62 years of age.

Paul lived a very full life and was an avid cyclist, golfer, and storyteller. He was a strong CUA supporter and had served several roles in the organization. He changed the face of Canadian Urology for the better and is truly one of our unsung heroes.