

## POST-GRADUATE EDUCATION AT DALHOUSIE



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"May there never develop in me a notion that my education is complete, but give me strength and leisure and zeal continually to enlarge my knowledge." These words from Maimonides Daily Prayer of a Physician are echoed in the minds of all doctors—but how difficult it proves to convert the pious thought into action!

Of the many ways by which doctors continue their education, while practicing, two have been given high preference—medical reading and post-graduate course attendance. The latter has been facilitated for practitioners of the Atlantic Provinces by the Dalhousie Post-Graduate programme.

**History**—In 1922 the Committee on Studies, with Faculty approval,

offered a Refresher Course in September. By its third year registrants from the three Maritime Provinces and Newfoundland numbered sixty-six, and seven eminent visitors from the United States and Canada presented papers. Starting with the fourth year, the American College of Surgeons added their support; and the fifth meeting, merged with that of the Medical Society of Nova Scotia, saw an attendance of one hundred and twenty-six. The war years, rather than leading to a decline, were marked by the participation of the Staffs of Service Units in the area. In 1949 the Annual Dalhousie Refresher Course was enlarged by the addition of the John Stewart Memorial Lecture. These lectures, sponsored by the Provincial Medical Board of Nova Scotia, have become the central feature of Refresher Course Week.

In the years immediately after World War II, difficulties experienced in the conduct of a Surgical Course for Royal College examination candidates. This led to action by the Committee on Studies which resulted, after study and receipt of a Kellogg grant, in the formation of the Dalhousie Post-Graduate Committee. The happy combination of circumstances, including a stimulating interest and demand on the part of practitioners, strong general faculty support, marked administrative interest, adequate funds, an active committee membership and a dedicated

"The years by themselves do not make a place historic.  
It is the men who give the color of history to a place by  
their deeds there or by merely having lived there."

—Simeon Strunsky

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executive director, resulted in a six year period of rapid expansion.

Toward the end of this period of Kellogg Foundation support, it became apparent that the Dalhousie Post-graduate programme was expanding beyond committee management size. After study by Faculty Council Committee, and faculty approval of their recommendations, the Post-Graduate Division of the Faculty of Medicine was formed in the Spring of 1957. Within its structure the Dalhousie Refresher Course Committee and the Post-Graduate Committee, continue to function and provision is made for the extension into such future spheres of activity as faculty may assign to the division from time to time. A further Kellogg grant permitted the appointment of a Medical Director for this division.

#### **Current Programme:**

(a) The Dalhousie Refresher Course, now in its thirty-second year, is conducted each October in Halifax, utilizing the facilities of Dalhousie, Victoria General, Camp Hill, Children's and Grace Maternity Hospitals; some sixty teachers participate, drawn from four groups. These are Dalhousie Faculty members, guest practitioners from the other Atlantic Provinces centres, featured guest teachers from other Canadian and American faculties, and the John Stewart Memorial lecturer. The American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma regularly meets on an evening of the same week. This year, and on special occasions

in the past, the Medical Society of Nova Scotia is combined. On occasion, also, the College of General Practice—Nova Scotia Chapter, has met on one evening during the same week.

(b) The Saint John Spring Clinical Session of two and a half days has recently completed its sixth year. The two day Refresher Course, held each September in St. John's, Newfoundland, by the College of General Practice, has been operating for three years. Day long clinical meetings of the New Brunswick Chapter College of General Practice in '56 and '57, and of the Nova Scotia Chapter in '58, have been planned and supported by a joint effort of the Dalhousie Post-Graduate Division and the College of General Practice. The Newfoundland meeting has been supported by the Dalhousie Post-Graduate Division, the Newfoundland Government and the College of General Practice. The Saint John Course has been supported by the Dalhousie Post-Graduate Division, the New Brunswick Medical Society and the Saint John Medical Society.

(c) Departmental Courses conducted annually in Halifax include the Week in Medicine and the Week in Surgery. These feature a different sub-specialty each year and a prominent guest speaker, and accept up to twenty practitioners in registration. Five day courses in Obstetrics and Care of the Newborn, and shorter courses in Psychiatry and Anaesthesia, are designed for small numbers up to ten. All emphasize basic considerations, recent advances

and general practice applications in a nice balance.

(d) Regional Courses are proving most popular, both with teachers and practitioners. Organized by a branch medical society, and held in a centrally located hospital in the area, they are a blend of clinical and didactic presentations of topics chosen by the attending doctors themselves. Successions at weekly or monthly intervals, constitute a "course". The teachers are drawn from the University Faculty, from six to twelve different teachers participating in a course.

(e) The "Day in a Hospital" is gaining in favour. An hospital medical staff arranging a series of ward rounds, with case presentations by local practitioners and discussion of each by a visiting consultant. Where a pathologist is on the Staff a clinical-pathological conference may be a feature.

(f) Isolated lectures are given in one town, or in several communities on successive days, by a specialist selected by the Provincial Medical Society, by a Dalhousie faculty member or by a visitor from another medical school faculty.

**Results:** From one hundred and fifty to two hundred doctors attend the Dalhousie Refresher Course, one hundred to one hundred and twenty the Saint John Clinical Session; and thirty, or more, the St. John's Newfoundland, Moncton and New Glasgow Sessions of the College of General Practice. Approximately

seventy-two doctors annually attend the Departmental Courses. At regional courses fifty to seventy-five percent of the doctors in the area are in attendance, while isolated lectures achieve a similar percentage of the possible audience. Between the years 1951 and 1957 the Dalhousie Post-Graduate Programme recorded an attendance of approximately eleven thousand. This represents the equivalent of one post-graduate session per year for every doctor in the four Atlantic Provinces.

**Problems:** Several major problems remain to be solved. Some doctors do not attend post-graduate courses. The Regional Course, near at hand, is most likely to stimulate interest in such cases. It is, however, expensive in time, teachers and travel funds. Post-graduate reading—the most important of all methods—is becoming more difficult as the volume of medical literature grows. Organizing and expediting post-graduate reading for the practitioner is a yet unexplored field in post-graduate teaching. Meeting the growing demands for course lecturers without impairing undergraduate teaching calls for a larger staff, a greater use of speakers from other universities and greater use of speakers from non-university centres. None of these problems can be solved without a considerably increased expenditure of funds.

**Financing:** Development of the Dalhousie Post-Graduate Programme to its present status was only possible because of the initial support, and subsequent partial support, of

the W. K. Kellogg Foundation which initially permitted development of the general practitioner continuing education programme, and is now making possible expansion into a Post-graduate Division. Acceptance of the programme by the practitioners in general is attested to by the financial support provided from the medical societies of the four Atlantic Provinces, from the Colleges of General Practice and from individual practitioners through the payment of registration fees and tuition fees. One pharmaceutical house has given steadily support and others have supported special projects from time to time. That financing has not proven an impossible obstruction to the conduct of this programme is to a considerable degree due to many services provided by the university, by hospitals participating in the programme throughout the Atlantic Provinces—and particularly in Halifax, by teachers who have devoted

considerable time with out-of-pocket expenses only being met. It has been estimated that the free services provided by these groups would, at least, double the costs of operation.

**Conclusion:** A report by Vollen on a survey of Post-Graduate Medical Education, carried out by the Council on Medical Education and hospital of the American Medical Association between 1952 and 1955, suggests that one week or fifty hours of formal post-graduate medical Education each year is a reasonable amount for physicians to aim in order to meet minimum educational needs over and above reading, professional contracts, and attending hospital and medical hospital and society meetings. The efforts of Dalhousie University Faculty of Medicine to bring this about, in co-operation with the Provincial Medical Societies, hospital staffs and hospital administrations of the four Atlantic Provinces, has been outlined.

#### REFERENCES:

1. Post-Graduate Medical Education in the United States. Vollen, D.D., 1955; published by American Medical Association.



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