



DISCOVERY WEEK 20 YEARS of PARTNERSHIP 1998-2018



Schulich
MEDICINE & DENTISTRY



Western



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Thank You

20 YEARS of PARTNERSHIP 1998-2018

Each year, during medical school graduation ceremonies, I ask the graduates to turn to the audience and thank their families with a round of applause and in doing so reflect on the many people who have supported them on the journey to and through their undergraduate medical studies: their peers, the faculty, staff, patients, and you – members of the School’s partner communities of Southwestern Ontario.

It’s a simple but powerful act, and one that is important as they take the next step in their training.

During the first eight months of medical school, students make the classroom their home as they are immersed in lectures, small group discussions and clinical skills practice. It’s not until the calendar flips to May that these aspiring physicians have the opportunity to engage with the rural and regional communities in Southwestern Ontario, and begin their learning in offices, clinics and hospitals, as they are exposed to the complete spectrum of rural care. This is when they really begin to discover what it means to be a physician.

Since 1998, first-year medical students have experienced Discovery Week. Annually, they venture off to your communities, and you welcome them into your homes. For some, Discovery Week represents a number of unknowns. For others it holds the promise of their future.

For one week, you teach and mentor them, house and feed them, provide them with a lived experience, and broaden their understanding and knowledge of what it means to live in a rural and regional community. In doing so, you meaningfully demonstrate to them what it means to provide health care to the people of Southwestern Ontario.

Each student returns having had the opportunity to witness all aspects of medicine and understand what it means to work with a health care team. Each one is enriched because of the experience. Thank you for partnering with us, for training and educating 2,969 medical students in the past 20 years, and for improving health care across the region.

We look forward to what the next 20 years will bring.

Sincerely,

Dr. Michael J. Strong, MD, FRCP(C), FAAN, FCAHS
Dean, Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry
Distinguished University Professor, Western University



Educating Learners

In communities since 1998

With immeasurable
benefits...

the lessons learned through Discovery Week last a lifetime.

Discovery Week has been the capstone to the first year of medical school at Schulich Medicine & Dentistry for twenty years. With immeasurable benefits, the lessons learned through the week-long experience last a lifetime.

As students don their backpacks after their last lecture, they get ready to discover what medicine on the ground is really like. And during the following two weeks, they will travel to rural and regional communities across Southwestern Ontario and work with physicians and health care teams to learn more about the joys and challenges of practising rural medicine.

Dr. Jim Rourke, who was integral to the development of Discovery Week, said that it came about in response to a pressing need for doctors in the region. As the former Director of the Southwestern Ontario Rural Regional Medical Education Network at Schulich Medicine & Dentistry, he was all too aware of the fact that parts of

Southwestern Ontario were some of the most under-served areas in the province. Discovery Week was part of a strategy to attract doctors to set up practice in rural and regional locations.

Research has shown that students begin making career decisions early in their medical school careers, so Discovery Week was designed to expose students to medicine as it was practised outside of large urban areas before they'd made firm plans.

"Discovery Week helped medical students see rural as both a community that needed care and as a place where they could learn about the challenges facing the rural populations," said Dr. Rourke.

"No matter where a physician practises, they need to know that rural people don't have the same access to all kinds of specialty services right next door that you do if you live in a big city," he said.

The unique rural and regional experiences provides community-

engaged learning for medical students, making them aware of the possibilities of setting up their own practices in towns like the ones they visited.

And in a case where the mentees become mentors, as the young medical students begin to discover rural and regional medicine, they take time to make presentations to high school students, with a goal to inspire future generations of medical students.

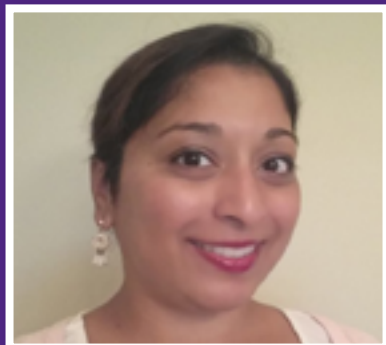
Discovery Week was integrated into the curriculum in 1998, when thirty-three locations across Southwestern Ontario welcomed first-year medical students into their hospitals, doctors' offices and communities, combining a week of clinical experience with a taste of small-town life. Twenty years later, it has grown to more than 60 locations, and strengthened the bond between Schulich Medicine & Dentistry and the surrounding areas.



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REFLECTIONS

Tisha Joy
MD'01



My medical school class was the first cohort to participate in what is now known as Discovery Week. It was certainly the best way to end our first year of medical school training which was primarily classroom-based. We were not entirely sure what to expect but we all were craving immersion into an actual hands-on learning environment.

And that is exactly what we got. The love of the community and the genuine caring and humility of the physicians in that community were equally and strongly demonstrated to me in that single week. It left a lasting impression on me such that I was happy to pursue other learning opportunities during clerkship, residency, and sub-specialty training in Aylmer and Windsor.

“It was certainly the best way to end our first year of medical school training which was primarily classroom-based.”

Ian Ball
MD'02



Discovery Week was a great experience. I definitely remember the incredibly warm reception from the entire town. Although I ended up as a sub-specialist in a teaching centre, the experience provided a lot of learning.

Eric Wong
MD'02



It was a fantastic experience. I vividly remember the physician I was shadowing testing me by asking me to interview one of his patients who had been feeling fatigued and generally unwell for the past six months. I think he was at least mildly impressed when I asked the most important question, “Did anything significant happen about six months ago?” It turned out that this patient’s wife passed away six months ago and he has been struggling with depressive symptoms.

Daniel Grushka
MD'05



I spent time shadowing and learning from the local internist and surgeon, but moreover, I was able to spend time mainly with family physicians who were providing full-service care in their clinics, the emergency department, the operating and delivery rooms, and the nursing homes. This initial experience helped pave the way for my future decision to pursue a career in family and emergency medicine.

Annually, community partners across Southwestern Ontario welcome students with open arms. It's the beginning of a relationship that will continue throughout their medical training and, for some, the rest of their lives. As students learn more about what it means to be a rural physician in the clinic, on the hospital ward, the emergency rooms, and the family physician offices, they also experience life in the community. During the week, students are encouraged to fully engage in life in the community by meeting locals, attending social events and touring all that the areas have to offer. As the week draws to an end, some students will already be thinking and planning for their return as residents and physicians.

“Discovery Week puts our communities on the map for many of these students. We see them return for further training in their clerkship and residency years. From this early and continued exposure, we have multiple opportunities to engage the student in our hospitals and communities.”

– LAURIE ROBERTS OF THE HURON PERTH HEALTHCARE ALLIANCE

“Discovery Week helps to increase connections between medical students and communities in Southwestern Ontario. It encourages doctors to set up practice here, which in turn, has a great impact on the well-being of communities and their residents.”

– JOANNE BOWEN FROM SOUTH HURON HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

“Each year, the students arrive fresh-face and bright-eyed. They can hardly wait to get into the exam room with the doctors and have experiences with real, live patients. During the week, students get a taste of their future careers, and start to become comfortable in the hospital environment.”

– HEATHER KLOPP, DIRECTOR OF PRIMARY CARE SERVICES IN GRAND BEND

“When they spend the week with us, we encourage them to make the most of it. Take the time to talk to everyone who crosses your path during the week – health care workers, hotel staff, restaurant staff, patients, volunteers, and physicians. Everyone has a story to tell and everyone has the capacity to change your life.”

– FANNY VAVOULIS, DIRECTOR, CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OFFICER OF THE CHATHAM-KENT HEALTH ALLIANCE

PARTNER PERSPECTIVES



Photo: Kincardine Lighthouse and Museum – Kincardine, Ontario

DISCOVERY WEEK

1 in 8

distributed education faculty have experienced Discovery Week.



of faculty at Schulich Medicine & Dentistry have experienced Discovery Week.

= 12%

2,969

medical students have participated in Discovery Week since 1998, including 2018.

BY THE NUMBERS

Students overwhelmingly agree that Discovery Week helped familiarize rural/regional medicine as a career.



Students consistently agree that Discovery Week is a positive learning experience.



COMMUNITY PARTNERS

20 YEARS of PARTNERSHIP 1998-2018

We are proud to recognize the community partners who have worked hard to make Discovery Week such a meaningful experience for Schulich Medicine students during the past 20 years. We are honoured to work with all of the hospitals, Family Health Teams, Community Health Centres and other organizations in the communities who make Discovery Week a success.

Amherstburg
Aylmer
Blenheim
Chatham
Chesley
Clinton
Dresden
Durham
Exeter
Flesherton
Forest
Goderich
Grand Bend
Hanover
Harrow
Ingersoll

Kincardine
Leamington
Lion's Head
Listowel
Markdale
Meaford
Milverton
Mt. Brydges
Mt. Forest
Newbury
Owen Sound
Palmerston
Petrolia
Point Edward
Port Elgin
Ridgetown
Sarnia

Seaforth
Southampton
St. Marys
St. Thomas
Stratford
Strathroy
Tavistock
Tillsonburg
Tobermory
Walkerton
Wallaceburg
West Lorne
Warton
Wingham
Woodstock
Zurich

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