

Doctor Anthony Kerigan

Doctor Anthony Kerigan, a.k.a. “Tony”, came to Canada from England in 1971 to complete his training at McMaster University in the area of Internal Medicine. For years he practiced as an internist in the areas of Respiriology and Geriatrics and finally “made the plunge” six years ago to further his training in Palliative Care by completing an added year of competency.

Dr. Kerigan is medical liaison for Emmanuel House (Hamilton, Ontario), a hospice originally founded 15 years ago to care for patients with HIV/AIDS. For the last two years, he has also worked devotedly within an integrated shared care outreach team consisting of palliative care providers offering in-home services to patients in the community.

By virtue of his background training, Dr. Kerigan is very well equipped to integrate a palliative care approach to the elderly as well as to those suffering from non-malignant diseases. He remarks on the increasing palliative care referrals for non-malignant illnesses and makes reference to what he calls a “needs based approach”, stressing the importance of focusing less on prognosis with these populations and focusing more on facilitating advance care planning. On that same note, he makes further reference to his role model, Cicely Saunders, who he recalls as always having been ready to move forward, focusing on the needs of her patients first and always addressing suffering. Dr. Kerigan feels this attitude is deeply required within our transforming specialty.

Dr. Kerigan loves his work in palliative care, primarily for his ability to meet his patients’ needs at all levels. He appreciates being able to visit his patients in their homes, which he feels allows for the most productive communication and for the empowerment of caregivers. Dr. Kerigan has a keen interest in understanding the way people encounter and handle challenges in their lives. He recognizes caregivers as “most remarkable people” and has grown to appreciate how important they are by seeing them in the home environment. He remarks on caregivers’ dedication and selflessness, and their willingness to put aside their own agendas to help loved ones in need, often to the detriment of their own health. He holds strongly to his role within the outreach team in supporting and encouraging caregivers and guiding them through the journey with their loved ones.

Photo: Dr. Kerigan and his wife Carol in Whistler.



When asked what his patients have taught him, Dr. Kerigan fondly replies – “to sit down and just listen”, going on to say that in the specialty of palliative care, with its changing landscape, “as long as we listen and are really in tune with our hearts, nothing can go wrong.” Dr. Kerigan’s motto, “one can always do things better, one can constantly improve” is one that portrays well his progressiveness and his genuine, selfless nature. He displays this further by looking up to Jean Vanier, a Canadian humanitarian and author who devoted his life to establishing homes for the mentally and physically disabled. Dr. Kerigan recommends his book “Becoming Human” which explains how helping and being amidst vulnerable people can humanize you.

Blessed with five children and eight grandchildren and married for 47 years to his wife Carol, Dr. Kerigan feels extremely fortunate. His spare time is mostly devoted to his family life and he ascribes much of his happiness and success to his wife and her ongoing support and encouragement. Dr Kerigan also enjoys remaining active and names cycling and dragon boating as his chosen pastimes. He also enjoys reading and learning about British History, naming his favourite author as Antonio Fraser, a British Historian.

I think it is safe to say that Dr. Kerigan is a caring, committed palliative care physician who is attentive to our changing discipline and who advocates for positive change, keeping one thing in mind – to stay connected to who we are and to care deeply for our patients and their loved ones, using our ears to listen and our hearts to heal.

Saneea Abboud