

# Peter Lee, MD, FRCPC, FRACP 1943–2014



## You Just Have to Keep Going

Growing up in New Zealand, Dr. Peter Lee was expected to leave school at age 15 and help his father on the family farm. At age 16, he was informed that he could attend university, provided that he study either dentistry or medicine. He chose dentistry. Halfway through his basic science year, his older brother suggested going into medicine instead; so the following year, that's what he did.

Peter Lee graduated from the University of Otago in 1966. Between 1972 and 1974, he trained under Watson Buchanan at the University of Glasgow, completing his MD thesis. He then undertook his rheumatology training at the University of Toronto in 1974–1975 and was appointed as staff at the Wellesley Hospital in 1979.

Over the course of his 33-year career, he ran the Scleroderma Clinic, where he followed the course of over 1000 individuals with the scleroderma spectrum of diseases. He enjoyed teaching and trained countless medical students, residents, and fellows. His lasting legacy is demonstrated through his advanced training of scleroderma fellows, many of whom have gone on to establish scleroderma programs in their own cities and countries.

Peter Lee contributed significantly to the national and international medical community. He was a member of the Rheumatology Examination Board between 1986 and 1994, holding the position of Chairman from 1992 to 1994. He was a consultant for the Ontario Ministry of Health, member of the Editorial Committee and Editorial Board of *The Journal of Rheumatology*, Chair of the Therapeutics Committee of the Canadian Rheumatology Association, member of the US Scleroderma Research Foundation Advisory Board, and member of the Biology and Medicine Panel for the Research Grants Council in Hong Kong. He was promoted to Professor of Medicine at the University of Toronto in 1995.

In conjunction with his academic success, he maintained a well-balanced life: He collected stamps, played golf and squash, and was an avid gardener, providing gardening consultations for friends. He was equally passionate about community service. Playing an active role in the Chinese medical professional community, he served as President of the Chinese Canadian Medical Society of Ontario, as well as President of the Federation of Chinese Canadian Profes-

sionals. He was also involved in the establishment of the Chinese Cultural Center of Greater Toronto. He was recognized by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration with the Ontario Volunteer Service Award in 2012.

When asked about obstacles that he had to overcome during his career, he identified one: his health, which he attributed to "terrible genes." At the age of 48 he had coronary artery bypass surgery, which was found incidentally when his wife, Patricia Lee, sent him for a stress test. In 2008, Patricia enrolled him in a biopsy study, and he was found to have aggressive prostate cancer. On reflection, he remarked that these were a "nuisance" rather than a real obstacle. His motto was "you just have to keep going." He strove to be the best doctor and provide the best treatment available. He never told a patient "I don't know" or "there is nothing to do." Rather he would say, "I am not sure right now, but I will definitely look into it." He treated patients as individuals and always took some time to laugh and joke with them.

His influential role and contributions to rheumatology were initially recognized in 2008, when he was awarded the inaugural Distinguished Rheumatologist Award by the Ontario Rheumatology Association. In 2013, he received national recognition with the Distinguished Rheumatologist Award from the Canadian Rheumatology Association. To mark his sustained contribution to rheumatology at the University of Toronto he was recognized by establishment of the Peter Lee Visiting Professorship in Scleroderma.

Peter passed away peacefully on June 21, 2014, at the age of 71. The rheumatology community will remember his many accomplishments, easy-going manner, humor, and kindness. In his memory, donations can be made to the Dr. Peter Lee Fund, Arthritis Research Foundation ([www.beatarthritis.ca](http://www.beatarthritis.ca)).

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J Rheumatol 2014;41:2490; doi:10.3899/jrheum.141204