

In Memoriam:

# James Bert Ryal Cosgrove, M.D., F.R.C.P.(C)

(1920-1984)



Dr. James Bert Ryal Cosgrove, a valued member of McGill University's department of neurology and neurosurgery since 1954, died in his sleep on the morning of May 11. The previous morning he had spent with residents on the neurology consultation service at the Royal Victoria Hospital, and the afternoon in his office with his own patients, some of whom he had cared for over decades.

Dr. Cosgrove was born in Tilston, Manitoba on 12 May 1920. He was a devoted son and proud of the pioneering spirit of his family. After receiving his MD from the University of Manitoba in 1944, he deferred postgraduate training for two years of army service. Returning to Winnipeg, he completed his senior rotating internship and first tested his research skills as a National Research Council Fellow in the University of Manitoba's department of physiology and medical research under the supervision of Dr. Joe Doupe. For this work he was awarded an MSc degree in medicine. From 1948 to 1952 Dr. Cosgrove studied clinical neurology at the National Hospital, Queen Square, and worked as an Elmore Research Fellow in the Department of Medicine, University of Cambridge. It was at Cambridge that he first became interested in the demyelinating diseases of animals and humans, and earned a second master's

degree for a thesis entitled "Myelination and Demyelination." In 1952 he returned to Winnipeg to initiate studies on the composition of cerebral spinal fluid in patients with multiple sclerosis, and two years later accepted an invitation to come to McGill to combine clinical investigation of multiple sclerosis with the practice of neurology. These activities, which filled his professional life over the next 30 years, were interrupted only by a sabbatical year in 1968 at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Hospital, and by visits to the MS research laboratories of the Mayo Clinic and the University of Strasbourg.

Building on the Montreal Neurological Institute's fledgling multiple sclerosis unit established by Dr. Roy Swank, Dr. Cosgrove created a clinic where a dedicated group of physicians and paramedical professionals provided superb ongoing care. The patients in turn cooperated in a number of clinical research projects that formed the basis of Dr. Cosgrove's impressive list of research publications. Today over 1,500 patients are followed in the MS clinic. The oldest in Canada, it has been a model for many similar units in the rest of the country.

Dr. Cosgrove's particular gift was in helping patients with chronic and often progressive disease cope with the inevitable medical and social complications of their condition, by instilling

realism without erasing hope, and by enlisting their enthusiastic support for research projects aimed at discovering the cause and ultimately the treatment for their illness. His willingness to spend time with patients seemed on occasion to conflict with the exigencies of the medicare system, but in this he refused to compromise. The result is that today a host of patients, many with multiple sclerosis, feel the same sense of loss at his death as do his friends and colleagues.

Dr. Cosgrove was devoted to the Montreal Neurological Institute and participated enthusiastically in the full range of its activities: clinical, educational, research, and social. His love of music was reflected in the Christmas choir that he organized at the Hospital and conducted for many years, and in the many music-filled parties in his home that are recalled with pleasure by friends from many hospitals. He was above all a man of

excellent character, unfailingly honest, kind and warm. He enjoyed life to the full. He will be remembered by his friends as a vigorous and enthusiastic man forever stimulating his junior colleagues to undertake clinical research, undaunted by the ever present shadow of the multiple sclerosis of his patients which he battled throughout his professional life.

Dr. Cosgrove is survived by his wife Alison, by his daughter Gillian, and by his two sons Rees and Ryal. Dr. Rees Cosgrove, a neurosurgical resident at the MNI, will perpetuate his father's skills in helping patients cope with neurological problems. Bert Cosgrove was immensely proud of his accomplished family, and his many friends and colleagues at McGill wish to send to them, along with their profound sympathy, the message that we recall with affection and pride, the personal and professional accomplishments of this remarkable physician.

Donald W. Baxter  
Fred Andermann  
Montreal