

**Dr. B. William Shragge**

The CEO of Associated Medical Services (formerly Hannah Foundation for the History of Medicine) passed away on 20 April 2012.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Shragge, whom all his friends and colleagues simply called “Bill,” has left us much too early at age 64. He has left the Canadian medical community, the Canadian communities in history of medicine and the medical humanities, but above all, he has left his dear family: his beloved wife Phyllis, his greatly treasured children, Marla, Andrea, Avi, Benjamin, and Rebecca, and his first grandson, Max, who was born in 2010. There was rarely a social gathering with Bill in attendance where he didn’t mention his friends’ and colleagues’ families or imparted stories about his own. Whatever the pressures and constraints of his working life, his family life was much more precious to him. What “a whirlwind” (the author can’t find another word that would describe him better) he was in his professional life as a physician and medical administrator!

Bill was born in Winnipeg, which he jokingly referred to as “Winterpeg,”—and it was indeed  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$  on that occasion. He often remarked about “his refreshing Canadian winters” and how he greatly missed them when working south of the border. Bill received his medical education in cardiovascular and thoracic surgery, as well as in critical care medicine from the University of Manitoba in 1976. That same year he also passed the exams for a Royal College Fellowship. Subsequently, he moved to Birmingham, Alabama, for a postgraduate fellowship of two years: “the most demanding climate I ever worked in,” he said. In 1978 he became a faculty member of McMaster’s Department of Surgery where he was Chair between 1985 and 1990. Complementary to his career in academic surgery, he developed a strong interest in medical education that actually became a personal vocation for him: he contributed to the McMaster UME program, supported student activities through AMS, was involved in the Canada-wide History of Medicine Days conferences in Calgary,<sup>2</sup> and was most recently engaged in the medical humanities through the AMS Phoenix program “A Call to Caring.”<sup>3</sup> All of this dedication spoke to his enthusiasm for medicine and health care: “The future of medical care depends on building an inter-professional community,” he told the author in March of last year.

Throughout his career, Bill held numerous leadership positions. Among others, he was the founding Chief of Staff of the Hamilton Health Sciences Corporation (1996), Chief of Staff of the Niagara Health System (2001), and Chief of Staff and Vice-President for Academic Medical Affairs of St. Peter’s Hospital in Hamilton (2004). In July 2009, Bill became the new CEO of AMS, a position in which he endeavoured to sustain AMS’s alignment with a number of history of medicine groups and activities in Canada, including the Canadian Society for the History

of Medicine, the History of Medicine Days conferences in Calgary, and the grant programs for students through AMS. Bill further accentuated AMS's support for a broader medical humanities initiative, one in which he perceived that the history of medicine would play a very significant part. It was astounding to know that even though he had been diagnosed with lung cancer in December of 2010, he continued to say, "We're just at the beginning of this project!" Asymptomatic for one year, he worked long days and travelled to many meetings throughout North America. However, his health deteriorated early in 2012 and in April he became hospitalized, leaving us all a few weeks later.

Bill's passing leaves an enormous void in the Canadian history of medicine community as well as in the broader community of medical education. Those who had a chance to meet and talk with him appreciated the warmth of his character and the great personal interest he took in everything and everyone connected to medical education. The open-hearted manner in which he conversed, particularly with students, encouraged them to uphold their ideals and follow their dreams. We feel the heavy loss of a fine colleague and good friend: "Shalom, Bill—thank you so much for your wonderful presence and your continuing inspiration!"

FRANK W. STAHNISCH, University of Calgary

#### NOTES

- 1 An official obituary can be viewed at: <http://www.bulletnewsniagara.ca/2012/04/21/former-nhs-chief-of-medical-staff-dr-bill-shragge-dead-at-64/>. Accessed 20 May 2012.
- 2 University of Calgary, "20th Anniversary Panel of the Calgary History of Medicine Days," History of Medicine Days Conference Program (2011): 1 <http://www.hom.ucalgary.ca/system/files/History+of+Medicine+Days+2011+-+PROGRAM+-+February+25,+2011-1.pdf>. Accessed 22 May 2012.
- 3 Associated Medical Services, *The AMS Health Professional Initiative* (Synthesis Document), Toronto, Ont: Associated Medical Services, 2011.