

The strong beginnings of urology in Halifax

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The Department of Urology at Dalhousie University has a distinguished and successful history. Dr. Frank G. Mack arrived in Halifax in 1916 as a lecturer in skin diseases and a demonstrator of bacteriology at Dalhousie University's Faculty of Medicine. He was soon dubbed the "Clap Doctor" of Halifax. At that time, general surgeons limited Dr. Mack's role in urology to making diagnoses via cystoscopy. After years of providing all urologic diagnoses for the general surgeons, Dr. Mack gradually gained partial surgical privileges, initially restricted to prostatectomies. It was not until the early 1930s that he was regularly performing renal surgery.

Urology appears to have been formally recognized as a separate specialty in 1934, when Dr. Mack was finally appointed Professor of Urology. Dr. Winfield joined the newly independent department. In the early 1930s, Dr. Mack demonstrated remarkable vision by recognizing the advent and importance of the Stern-McCarthy resectoscope. In 1932, he travelled by train to New York to learn directly from its inventors. Upon his return to Halifax with the resectoscope, Dr. Mack was probably the first Canadian to use this revolutionary instrument.

Although urology had successfully separated from general surgery, Dr. Mack continued to teach dermatology, which remained linked to urology until his retirement in 1951. He was also a founding member of the Canadian Urological Association in December 1945. At that inaugural meeting, Dr. Robin Pearce served as President, Dr. A.G. LaRoche as President-elect, Dr. James McClelland as Secretary, Dr. Paul Bourgeois as Treasurer, and Drs. W.A. Dakin, F.Gordon Mack, and R.E. Powell as Executive Members.

Dr. Clarence L. Gosse arrived in Halifax in late 1945, and in 1951, he was appointed Professor of Urology. He had completed postgraduate training in surgery and urology in Cleveland, Ohio. Dr. Gosse joined the Royal Canadian Army Corps and served

overseas, heading a surgical unit that landed on the beaches of Normandy on D-Day. His major contribution occurred during his time in England, where he learned Dr. Terence Millin's retropubic prostatectomy technique and can be credited with its widespread adoption in Canada.

In 1949, Dr. Mack's son, Dr. F. Gordon Mack, joined the partnership of "Mack and Gosse." This association played a significant role in the department's development, as it enabled many young urologists to begin their careers with security in well-defined areas of practice.

Dr. Gosse's appointment as Professor of Urology proved exceptionally fortunate for the department. He was a dynamic leader, a respected teacher, an effective administrator, and later an important political figure.

In 1967, Dr. Stan Lannon, who had received specialized training in kidney transplantation at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal, joined the staff. Drs. Mack and Gosse also recruited Drs. W.A. Ernst (pediatric urology), Oliver H. Millard (uro-oncology), Philip Belitsky (kidney transplantation), Robert D. Schwarz (pediatric urology), and R. Brewer Auld (men's health). Dr. Belitsky, along with his general surgery colleagues, played an integral part in the development of a very successful and internationally recognized kidney transplant program.

In addition, a collaborative arrangement with Dartmouth General Hospital, involving Drs. Robert Wentzell and Shu Yoon, further expanded the spectrum of urologic services. By the end of Dr. Gosse's tenure, numerous hospital beds throughout Halifax were dedicated to urology, including those at the Victoria General Hospital, Halifax Infirmary, IWK, Camp Hill Hospital, and the Navy Hospital. He served as President of the Canadian Urological Association and President of the Medical Society of Nova Scotia. Two years after his retirement, Dr. Gosse was appointed Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, a position he served with distinction for five years.

When Dr. Gosse retired in 1971, Dr. F. Gordon Mack assumed leadership of the department. Dr. Mack was a Dalhousie medical graduate from the class of 1944 and served as a Surgeon Lieutenant in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve during World War II. Following his father's stroke in 1945, he took an early discharge from the Navy to assist in his

father's practice. Because his father was already well-known as a urologist, he was frequently called upon to perform cystoscopies and minor urologic procedures, albeit at an early stage in his career. He subsequently completed a three-year urology residency at McGill University. After receiving his fellowship in urology, he returned to Halifax.

In contrast to Dr. Gosse, Dr. Mack was a modest and obliging department head with a gentle manner. He was widely respected for both his surgical skills and his teaching ability and became legendary for his extraordinary knowledge, technical expertise, and calmness under pressure. His other great passion was sailing. In 1972, he was invited to join the prestigious Cruising Club of America in recognition of his seamanship, and he later served as Commodore of the Royal Nova Scotia Yacht Squadron. Dr. Mack stepped down as department head in 1981 but remained an active member of the department until his retirement in 1989, at which time he was appointed Professor Emeritus.

In 1981, Dr. Said Awad was appointed the first full-time Head of the Department of Urology, marking a significant change in departmental administration in response to increasing clinical, academic, and managerial demands. Dr. Awad came from Queen's University with a strong reputation in research, a particular interest in urodynamics and functional urology, and notable administrative skills. Under his leadership, the Department of Urology flourished and achieved national recognition, particularly for its research accomplishments. Together with Dr. John Downie, he established a world-class lower urinary tract research laboratory within the Department of Pharmacology. He also developed a very strong residency training program. The department successfully acquired vital new equipment, especially in the rapidly advancing field of endoscopic surgery, and was among the early adopters of extracorporeal shockwave technology.

Recent Heads of the Department have included Dr. Richard Norman (1997–2007), Dr. David Bell (2007–2018), and, most recently, Dr. Greg Bailly (2018–present). All three were trainees of Dr. Awad's tenure and

continued to recruit and support many academic urologists. Presently, the Department of Urology at Dalhousie University consists of 15 faculty members, 25 adjunct faculty, six cross-appointments, 13 residents, and two fellows (kidney transplantation, functional urology).

Other urologists held important leadership positions over the years and were well-known in Canadian urology. Dr. R. Brewer Auld served as Head of the Department of Urology at Camp Hill Hospital from 1980–1987. Dr. Oliver H. Millard was Head of the Department of Urology at the Halifax Infirmary from 1964–1994.

In 1996, the IWK Hospital for Children and the adjacent Grace Maternity Hospital merged to form the IWK Grace Children's Hospital. The institution later shortened its name to the IWK Health Centre. Dr. W. Alan Ernst was the first urologist to declare a subspecialty in pediatrics. He was Head of the Division of Urology at the IWK Hospital from 1970–1991, followed by Dr. Robert Schwarz, who arrived from Boston after serving in the U.S. Peace Corps in Africa in lieu of being drafted into the armed forces during the Vietnam conflict. He was joined by Dalhousie graduate Dr. Peter Anderson in 1991, who was Head of Pediatric Urology from 2012 to his retirement in 2021. Currently, the IWK Division Head is Dr. Dawn MacLellan, also a Dalhousie alumnus.

Despite being in a relatively small province in Canada, the Department of Urology at Dalhousie University has been very active in Canadian academic urology and has a reputation of developing very strong urologic surgeons. Many urologists from Dalhousie have also participated significantly to the success of the CUA organization over the past couple of decades, including Past-Presidents, Drs. Peter Anderson, Jerzy Gajewski, and Ricardo Rendon, as well as current Secretary, Dr. Ashley Cox.

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