

Dr. Niedoba stepping down from office practice

By Bill Rea

Running an office-based medical practice is very much like operating a small business.

Bolton's Dr. Joe Niedoba has spent more than 30 years in that business, but he will be stepping away from that at the end of the month.

While he will no longer be running his office practice, Niedoba said he plans to keep busy, and that will include medicine. He's been the medical director at the Davis Centre in Bolton since the facility opened in the mid-1980s, and he's planning to stay with that, as well as serving with King Nursing Home and Malton Village, which is not far from Etobicoke General Hospital. He's also the corporate physician at Husky Injection Molding Systems in Bolton.

Niedoba graduated from the University of Toronto in 1977. He interned at St. Joseph's Health Centre in Toronto and spent a year practising internal medicine at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, coming to Caledon in 1983. He started working in Caledon East with Dr. E.W. Twiddy.

‘He was just a wonderful doctor,’ he said. ‘Typical country doctor.’

Niedoba moved to Bolton in 1985, where several people, including Dr. Milan Kacer and Pat Bifolchi, convinced him to practise there.

There have been a lot of unique features that have been started at the Davis Centre over the years Niedoba's been associated with the facility.

They include a respite program, that offered a break for caregivers.

‘That was really a unique program,’ he observed.

The home also is the base for Caledon Meals on Wheels. As well, it offers a day program for seniors to be dropped off to spend the day.

‘It's not just a nursing home,’ he said. ‘It does a lot of other things.’

He also pointed out the facility received an award for the least number of transfers to emergency rooms in Peel. He said it's ‘kind of an acknowledgement of excellence of care that speaks to the nurses there,’ he said. ‘They do an incredible job.’

Niedoba said he's found nurses very dependable throughout his career.

He recalled his first night on-call in intensive care, having to deal with patients hooked up to ventilators and tubes.

‘I didn't have a clue what I was doing,’ he said. ‘Thank God for the nurses. The nurses were fantastic.’

Most family doctors enjoy what they do.

‘It's very special to be able to help people,’ he commented. ‘I think that's why we do it for as long as we do.’

On the other hand, he said there have been changes over the years, which he believed has caused some deterioration in the health care system. He also believes there's some reluctance in government in ‘making the hard choices that need to be done to make the delivery of health care better than it is now.’

He added he felt some frustration that he thinks is shared by family doctors in general. ‘We're asked to do, the classical expression, more and more with less.’

He recalled when he first started in practice, he could get on the phone with a specialist for advice, and make arrangement for a patient to be seen relatively quickly. ‘That's almost never the case now,’ he said.

He also said he doesn't want the hassels that come with running a small business, dealing with issues like IT, telephones, supplies, etc. ‘There's a lot involved, and it will be nice not to do that any more,’ he said.

Niedoba, who turns 65 next month, said he's looking forward to spending more time with gardening.

‘I don't think I'll have any challenge there,’ he remarked, adding he has other plans for his time. ‘It will be nice to have time to play my guitar.’

Niedoba also said he earned an MBA about 15 years ago, and said he might get involved in some business ventures. ‘It will be fun to utilize those skills a bit more than I have,’ he said.

Niedoba's practice will be taken over by Dr. Saima Haleem, effective Feb. 1.

He said she received her medical training in Nova Scotia, and has extensive experience in hospital and community medicine.

‘I regard myself as being extremely fortunate,’ he said, observing that many times, when a doctor retires, the patients are left without a replacement. ‘They're going to be in good hands, and that's a huge relief.’

He also said it will be nice to have time to step back and not feel like he has to rush into something.

‘If I can't do it, my wife's going to make sure I do it,’ he said.

