

Obituary ? Peter Cole had careers in public, family health

The Dufferin-Caledon area has lost one of its longest-serving physicians with the unexpected death last week of Dr. Peter Cole. After a long career in public health which saw him serve as medical officer of health in Halton and Peel Regions, Dr. Cole set up a family practice for the Orangeville area in 1999, based at the rustic Glamorun Healing Centre on Highway 10 near Monora Park. In his 70th year, he was in apparently good health until a few weeks ago when he began suffering what was originally diagnosed as kidney stones. Taken initially to Headwaters Health Care Centre, he died last Wednesday (March 4) in Brampton Civic Hospital. Although he may have been the Orangeville area's oldest practising family physician, he said in an year-end interview that he had no plans to retire for at least another five years and hoped to turn over his practice to a former student who loved Glamorun and whose husband is an internist.

Before his death, he had entered into an agreement that will see about half the 11-acre Glamorun site go to Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) . The ?eco grant? of about six acres will give CVC an uninterrupted tract of land between Monora Park and the Island Lake Conservation Area.

A Toronto native who obtained a fellowship in Community Medicine some time after graduating in medicine from the University of Toronto and interning at Toronto's Mount Sinai hospital, Dr. Cole had his first family practice in Toronto before embarking on the public health career, during which, in the 1970s, he had a leading role in establishing three community health centres in the Toronto which, unlike ordinary medical clinics, have salaried staffs of doctors and nurses. At one point in the same period, he was director of a Toronto family planning program.

Appointed Medical Officer of Health in Halton in 1981, he became Peel's MOH three years later, staying there 15 years while he and wife Ila lived on Shaw's Creek Road in Caledon.

Dr. Cole eschewed the potentially more profitable option of billing the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) for each service provided, preferring instead to have OHIP base his remuneration on the size of his patient roster, which he kept to about 1,700 individuals at a time when some area doctors have 3,000 or more on their rosters.

Tall, lean and bearded with a ponytail, Dr. Cole could pass for a 1960s hippie, and he did have a motorcycle. He and Ila, who is a nurse, lived in an apartment at Glamorun that adjoined the doctor's office.

In the interview, Dr. Cole attributed his desire to keep practising in part to the locale. ?It's a perfect setting, surrounded by trees,? he said, noting that many of his patients remark at Glamorun's healing effect. ?I love it here. I doubt I will ever be bored with the practice.?

A memorial service is planned for March 29 at the Monora Park Pavilion.