

First double-lung transplant recipient dies

Ann Harrison, the patient who underwent the world's first successful double-lung transplant at the Toronto General Hospital in 1986, died of a brain aneurysm at the same hospital Apr. 20. She was 56. In a eulogy, the surgeon who performed the procedure said he could not have asked for a better patient. "Ann began a new era, one that has brought immense relief to emphysema patients," said Dr. Joel Cooper. "Having received this gift, she became a den mother for so many other patients, encouraging them in their quest, celebrating with them their victories, and consoling them and their families in their losses." Cooper, who now practises in St. Louis, says he still shows a picture of Harrison during every lecture he gives on transplantation. "I still marvel when someone so close to death is returned to a vigorous life," he says. — *CMAJ*

Tuition fees continue upward spiral, hit new high at Western

New medical students at the University of Western Ontario in London are facing tuition-fee increases of \$4000 per year this September, a move that will give Western the second highest tuition fees among Canada's 16 medical schools.

The increase will boost first-year fees by 40%, to \$14 000 per year, while students in other years face a 5% increase. Meanwhile, tuition at the University of Toronto will rise by 5%, to \$14 700, for the 2001/02 academic year. Western's fees will be slightly higher than the \$13 500 paid by medical students at McMaster University in Hamilton.

Ontario's fees are by far the highest in the country. For instance, first-year medical students attending the University of British Columbia pay only

about \$5000 per year for tuition.

The increase at Western will apply only to new students, but current students claim it will create a situation in which applicants from poor families will be unable to pursue a medical degree.

They say that only 15% of students now enrolled there are from families in which the annual income is under \$60 000. The average family income of this year's freshman medical students was \$142 000, which the students say is triple the provincial average for household incomes.

The province's tuition trends worry Dr. Albert Schumacher, president of the Ontario Medical Association, who says the maximum student loan available under the Ontario Student Assistance Program is \$11 000 per year.

The OMA is concerned that high fees will not only deter some students but will lead to changes in their choice of residency programs. Instead of following their interests, students may specialize in an area they can complete quicker, or one that has the potential to provide a higher income.

Jason Kur, a fourth-year student at the University of Alberta who serves as president of the Canadian Federation of Medical Students, said Western's increase stands out only because it is the largest.

He said medical students accept that they have to pay higher fees, but many are still reeling from the size of the increases. — *Cameron Johnston*, London, Ont.

ON THE NET

Virtually there: take a medical school tour without leaving home

Choosing a medical school is fraught with difficult choices involving location, physical layout, mood, academic offerings and more. Site visits can be helpful, but not everyone can make the trek. To make the choice easier, some medical schools have begun showing off their wares online.

Dalhousie Medical School (www.medicine.dal.ca/home/tour) is leading the way with a new virtual tour — "the next best thing to visiting us in person." Using a series of 360 degree photos taken at different campus sites, the tour lets web users stroll around campus buildings, sit in on a class and visit area teaching hospitals. Small Java applets allow viewers to look around a scene just as if they were standing there, rotating in a circle.



Wes Robertson, the school's information technology director, said feedback has been positive. "People really love the feeling of 'being there' that they get from the tour," said Robertson. "We are confident that with the virtual tour we are now able to attract students who would not otherwise be considering coming to Dalhousie, or to the Maritimes."

To take the tour your browser must be Java-enabled; a high-speed Internet connection works better than a modem.

The University of Alberta's Faculty of Medicine also includes an electronic stroll through its facilities (www.med.ualberta.ca/tour/), as does Memorial University in Newfoundland (www.mun.ca/recruit/virtour/). These use the more conventional approach of static clickable pictures to give potential students a view of the site. — *Michael O'Reilly*, mike@oreilly.net



Not alone: students across Canada are protesting high tuition fees