

# Celebrating a Gastroenterology Icon:

## DR. NORMAN MARCON



In June of this year, Dr. Marcon hung up his endoscope for the last time. The Ontario Association of Gastroenterology wishes to salute Dr. Marcon for his contribution to science and medicine. As all icons, in the correct context all you need to say is Norm, and our colleagues locally and afar know that you are referring to Dr. Norman Marcon.

When the Wellesley Hospital moved to St. Michael's Hospital now over two decades ago, most of its staff were just pleased to just retain their jobs. But Norm had a better plan.

He demanded that the top of the hospital be designated the endoscopy unit, placed strategically to facilitate moving referred patients from helicopter to endoscopy. The unit would include Pathology, Radiology and Anesthesia hubs to help the Gastroenterologists manage the patients. This was typical Norm: big unreasonable plans focused on endoscopy. It was also typical that he didn't get what he requested, but by asking for so much, he persuaded St. Michael's to build Canada's largest and best equipped endoscopy unit.

After half a century of championing interventional gastroenterology, Norm is the undisputed father of endoscopy in Canada, Officer of the Order of Canada, Professor of Medicine, recipient of at least one achievement award from virtually every GI organization, including the Distinguished Service Award, OAG, 2001. As a researcher, he focused on harnessing technology to endoscopy, culminating in 157 articles and book chapters together with countless lectures and demonstrations. In recognition, the needle used to inject mucosa has been labelled as the Marcon-Haber injector and the tube to decompress dilated colons the Marcon catheter. He was the chief of the Division of Gastroenterology at the Wellesley Hospital for an unprecedented 28 years, and uninterrupted head of the Annual International Course on Therapeutic Endoscopy since 1982. The secret to its success was Norm's unique recognition of the educational value of live endoscopic demonstrations. About 100 fellows from across the globe have trained in endoscopy with him, 23 now professors, in a post-graduate endoscopy program that he developed independently clinical problems, known to invariably help with patients when asked, no matter how scare his resources or sick the patient. He was relentless in moving endoscopy forward from an apparently undignified, frowned-upon, laughed-at activity unbecoming of scholarly internists, to a respectable field in its own right, arguably the means by which Gastroenterologists now contribute the most to medical care. All this he pioneered himself, stimulating, pushing and cajoling skeptic funders, administrators and colleagues to solve problems in clinical gastroenterology with endoscopic techniques. At the same time he fostered within his Division an unmistakable culture of collegiality and passion for endoscopy, consistently prioritizing the sickest patients requiring creative thinking for care rather than clinical guideline adherence. It is a rare vintage Ontario Gastroenterologist who has not asked Norm for help at one time or another: there is no physician who has ever been refused.

St. Michael's has built on the reputation of the former Wellesley Hospital to become synonymous with therapeutic endoscopy. The global recognition of St. Michael's Hospital as a center of excellence for therapeutic endoscopy is credited to the vision and determination of Norm. All of us are committed to maintaining his legacy during the decades ahead.