

Wave theory of rural medicine

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The art of rural generalist medicine continues, but it is not continuous. There are frequent disturbances that crest and trough. The energy propagates through the rural medicine medium with many sources and frequencies. At times the interference pattern is out of phase and the disturbance is reduced, and at times interference is enhanced with added amplitude nearing the breaking point.

Rural doctors are quite close to the warp and weft of the medium. On a personal level, I would posit that all rural doctors feel it, not the least in these times of uncertainty. At times it's too much and we need to still the waters. Most of us manage to cope, but we know of many who must leave for the city before they break, and others who are unable to get out of the way and are broken by the tsunami wave. Let's remember them well.

Organisationally, the Society of Rural Physicians of Canada has long appreciated that people's ability to do the good work will ebb and flow. Even and especially in rural leadership, there are times when you

can, and times when you can't. This is one of the benefits of a collective of generalists. Anyone's work can carry on with a little help from our friends.

I would argue that rural medicine itself is subject to these forces. There are times when collaborators for cooperative measures are simply not there, and other times when they are. This applies to research funding, government support, medical association orientation and so on. It doesn't matter if it's scientific publishing, rural incentives or collaborative works with other organisations.

Through my years, I remember being an angry young man. Many times I heard people telling me, 'no'. With hindsight, I can say that it's not that this or that can't be done. Even when the person says no, it's really a statement that I, we, they, can't right now. It's not a no, or rather, I don't consider it a no, but a 'yes, perhaps later'. Persistence and an openness to others in the rural medium has opened doors that have seemed shut before.

To all of you doing the good work, thanks.

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