



## Dr. Jill McEwen-in memoriam

*July 20, 1957–November 1, 2024*

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On November 1st, 2024, the Canadian emergency medicine (EM) community suffered a profound loss with the sudden and unexpected death of Dr. Jill McEwen. For decades, Jill was a towering presence in EM; a trailblazing clinician, an innovative educator, a visionary leader, and a passionate advocate for women in her specialty. She was also a strong proponent of work-life balance. Beyond her professional accomplishments, Jill was a devoted mother of four, a grandmother, and an animal lover who shared her home with three cats and a black Labrador. In her spare time, Jill enjoyed running, hiking, cycling, skiing, boating, and spending time with family and friends at her ocean-side cabin.

Jill grew up in Vancouver, and graduated from medical school at the University of Toronto in 1982. She was a member of a small cohort of pioneer Canadian physicians to first undertake EM training when she began her

Royal College EM residency at Queen's University in 1983. Jill's career started when EM was still evolving and women faced significant barriers to both entry and advancement. Undaunted by the male-dominated culture, Jill joined the Vancouver General Hospital (VGH) Emergency Physician group in 1987, where she practiced EM at VGH and later also the University of British Columbia (UBC) Hospital for over 37 years. Her colleagues recall her as an outstanding clinician who delivered emergency department (ED) care with clinical excellence and unparalleled energy, grace, and empathy. Jill also worked as a virtual physician on the BC provincial 811 line, provided rural locum coverage, and was a ski patrol physician on a local Vancouver ski hill.

Jill's passion for medical education was apparent throughout her career. Beyond authoring a chapter in "Rosen's Emergency Medicine", as UBC's EM Undergraduate Program Director, she spearheaded the development of the first mandatory medical student EM clerkship in Canada in the late 1990s. Under Jill's leadership, this 4-week rotation continues to be a top-rated mainstay of UBC's medical student education. Jill rose to the level of Clinical Professor at UBC, and served as Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Medical Education for the Fraser region. She was also a powerful voice and catalyst in the establishment of a Department of EM at UBC in 2009. Underscoring her commitment to life-long learning, in 2010, Jill commenced a Master's Degree in Medical Education. In 2013, she received the Canadian Association of Medical Education's Merit Award, which celebrates faculty who have profoundly impacted Canadian medical education.

Jill was a longstanding member of the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians (CAEP). She joined CAEP as a resident in 1984, and later in her career volunteered on numerous national task forces, committees, and initiatives including serving as Chair of the Undergraduate Education Committee. Her efforts were instrumental in the

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implementation of a mandatory EM curriculum in medical schools across Canada and the United States. This resulted in numerous speaking engagements for Jill on undergraduate EM education, both nationally and internationally. After 2 years on the Board of Directors, Jill went on to lead CAEP from 2014–2016 as its 25th and only its second female President. As President, Jill successfully stewarded CAEP through a turbulent period for membership, finances, and internal EM politics, resulting in a lasting legacy of growth and engagement across the Canadian EM community.

One of Jill's crowning achievements as CAEP President was establishing the CAEP *Position Statement on EM Definitions*, published in CJEM in 2018. Jill's collaborative leadership style, inclusivity, respect for diversity, and diplomacy led to the successful release of this complex position statement, despite significant challenges and politics arising from Canada's varied EM training streams and workforce. This groundbreaking document included statements on EM as a specialty, the importance of formal training and certification in EM, and defining emergency physicians by their certified skillset rather than the hospital location where they worked. The position statement also included a vision that one day every patient presenting to an ED in Canada would be cared for by a certified emergency physician. Jill's long list of additional CAEP accomplishments includes supporting the establishment of the Academic Section and the EM Research Network, and engagement with the Education Scholars Committee. It was fitting that in 2019, Jill was awarded the CAEP President's Award, the organization's highest honor.

Jill also had significant impact on women in EM. Within her Vancouver clinical community, she was known as a trusted advocate and advisor. Nationally she actively served on the CAEP Women in EM Committee, an initiative with a goal to empower women in EM through representation,

mentorship, education, and advocacy. Jill was renowned as a relentless champion for equity, diversity, and inclusion who lifted up other women and encouraged them to shatter glass ceilings and redefine what was possible. As a mentor, she had an extraordinary ability to see the potential in people, open doors for her mentees, and give them the confidence to dream bigger.

A central aspect of Jill's professional legacy arises from the strong advocacy she demonstrated throughout her career. This included advocacy for: EM training and certification; EM as a specialty; the concept that EM can be practiced for an entire career; EM trainee and workforce diversity; the need for all medical students to learn the essentials of emergency care from emergency physicians; national standards and guidelines to advance ED care; and appropriate physical conditions and care provision in the ED. One of Jill's final CAEP roles was service on a committee to develop a position statement on Advanced Career Emergency Physicians that was approved by the CAEP Board in December 2024. Jill was a true servant leader, and consistently strived to make a positive impact on EM and on ED patient care.

Dr. Jill McEwen was a veritable titan of emergency medicine. For Jill, emergency medicine was not simply a profession, it was a calling she embraced with unwavering passion. Her enduring legacy encompasses the innumerable lives she transformed, the barriers she dismantled, and the monumental impact she made on the field of emergency medicine she so dearly loved.

## Declarations

**Conflict of interest** None.