

FAMILY MEDICINE IS NOT ONLY SCIENCE

IT'S AN ART AS WELL, WRITES NADIA ALAM



NADIA ALAM
Column

As 2019 ends, I find myself looking back, at the past year, at my family's achievements, and at my life's work, medicine, the profession to which I've devoted my life.

Family medicine is not just science - though the science is extraordinary. What medicine can do to help people live longer, live better, live smarter is nothing short of brilliant.

But medicine is also an art. Summerside, P.E.I., 2006, population 14,500. My final year of medical school. I was working with a small town doc.

"He's not just any doctor. He's my doctor."

The patient, a woman suffering from chronic pain, added, "No one believed me 'til him. He got me."

Such trust, even though he couldn't cure her.

That is what separates family medicine from every other specialty in medicine. You don't just manage acute, episodic or chronic diseases from head to toe. You become master at managing the undifferentiated illness. The illness that hasn't declared itself. The illness that doesn't fit the thousands of known patterns. The illness that, even when it has no name, causes suffering and disability.

Because at the end of the day, the person sitting across from you is your patient. You are still with them when everyone else has signed off.

You may not cure them, but you get them in a way nobody else does.

Patients tell me things that

they don't tell their best friends. Funny, sad, joyful things. I know their life stories when they are at their most vulnerable.

The magic in family medicine is this doctor-patient relationship. A relationship born of knowing a patient through ups and downs, illness and health, year after year. Not just knowing the normal and abnormal of the human body as it navigates life and disease, but knowing that specific patient in their specific context. This is called continuity of care.

Research shows that having the same family doctor year after year heals. It decreases mortality and improves health. In and of itself, continuity of care even blunts the impact of one entire chronic disease. It's that powerful.

We live in a Google-powered, Uber-style world moving at the speed of social media. For all our advances, I worry when patients sacrifice continuity of care for convenience - when patients go to the nearest walk-in clinic instead of their own family doc. Though retail care may increase use of the health-care system, it doesn't improve what's really important: Patient health.

Nadia Alam is a Georgetown physician and past president of the Ontario Medical Association. Her columns also appears on www.medium.com/@docschmadia. She can be reached at nadia.alam@oma.org.



halton.ca 311



Halton Hills Christmas Day Household Waste Collection Notice

Please note collection day changes:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		Christmas Day 25	26 Areas A, B & C Collection moves		28 Area D Collection moves
Dec 23	24			27	

Please place your waste at the curb by 7 a.m. on your scheduled holiday collection day.

Halton Waste Management Site

Closed Wednesday, December 25, 2019 and Wednesday, January 1, 2020	Regular Operating Hours Monday to Saturday 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. 5400 Regional Road 25, Milton
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Holiday waste tips

 Blue Box <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aluminum foil & trays Boxed beverage containers Plastic bottles Plastic plates & cups 	 Green Cart <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All food waste Paper plates & cups Napkins Tissue paper (free of tape & glitter) 	 Garbage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plastic & compostable cutlery Compostable plastic cups Food wrap Styrofoam 
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Reduce your holiday waste

- Reuse gift wrap, gift bags and ribbon
- Wrap presents in newspaper or use cookie tins
- Make handmade gifts
- Donate household items in good condition

Reminder: Your 2020-21 Halton Region Guide and Waste Collection Calendar will be delivered by mail at the end of January 2020.

Visit halton.ca/waste or download the OneHalton app to sign up for weekly reminders, find your collection day and use our Put Waste in its Place sorting tool.

Help keep our community safe this holiday season

During the holiday season, residents can help keep our roads and community safe by following these tips:

- Use winter tires on your vehicle and store an emergency kit in your car before the arrival of any severe winter weather.
- Practise these four food safety tips: clean, cook, separate and chill.
- Sign up for our email alerts to stay informed about extreme cold temperatures.
- Protect yourself from the flu by getting the flu shot from your family doctor, local pharmacy or walk-in clinic.

For more safety tips, visit halton.ca.



Gary Carr
Regional Chair

Meetings at Halton Region, 1151 Bronte Rd., Oakville, L6M 3L1
Visit halton.ca for full schedule.

Jan 15 9:30 a.m. Regional Council



Please contact us, as soon as possible, if you have any accessibility needs at Halton Region events or meetings.