

# Across the Causeway: Dalhousie Medicine expands to three

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On January 27, 2023, Dalhousie Medical School announced the addition of its third medical campus—the Cape Breton Medical Campus or “CBMC”.<sup>1</sup> Based in Sydney, the CBMC will welcome its first cohort of 30 students in August 2025, emphasizing training in family medicine and rural health care.<sup>2</sup> It will join the existing Dalhousie Medicine Nova Scotia (DMNS) and Dalhousie Medicine New Brunswick (DMNB) campuses, building on more than 150 years of medical education at Dalhousie.

The launch of the CBMC reflects a broader movement to address physician shortages in Canada, particularly in rural and underserved areas. In 2014, the College of Family Physicians of Canada and the Society of Rural Physicians of Canada published the Rural Road Map for Action, a framework outlining four key directions and several guiding statements towards improving the health of rural Canadians.<sup>3</sup> The CBMC addresses several aspects of the framework directly, such as: (1) incorporating affinity and suitability for rural practice into admissions criteria, (2) supporting the successful recruitment of Indigenous and rural students to medical school, (3) providing high-quality rural clinical and educational experiences to medical students, and (4) fostering government and university partnerships with rural physicians, rural communities, and regional health authorities.<sup>3</sup>

The concept of distributed medical education in Canada is not new. Several medical schools have adopted variations of distributed models, from hub-and-spoke systems with regional centres (e.g., Dalhousie, McMaster, Toronto, UBC, Western) to centrally operated programs with smaller affiliated teaching sites (e.g., Calgary, Memorial, Ottawa, Queen's).<sup>4</sup> Many schools also offer longitudinal integrated clerkships, where senior medical students complete their entire clerkship year in one peripheral community as opposed to traditional block-based rotations.<sup>4</sup> The Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM), which opened in 2005, was the first Canadian medical school with a clear social accountability mandate.<sup>5</sup> NOSM primarily accepts applicants from Northern Ontario and other rural areas, as well as Indigenous and Francophone applicants.<sup>6</sup> NOSM is structured as a geographically distributed, collaborative network as opposed to a centralized hierarchy, referring to the “entire geography of Northern Ontario” as its campus.<sup>5</sup> This approach has led to increased recruitment to family medicine and physician retention in the area; among the first ten

years of NOSM graduates, 77% became family physicians and 54% were practicing in Northern Ontario.<sup>7</sup>

As medical schools increase their capacity and add new sites, maintaining meaningful opportunities for in-person collaboration is essential. While virtual learning has become an indispensable tool in recent years, it cannot fully replace the benefits of face-to-face engagement.<sup>8</sup> This issue's feature article, “Building bridges between provinces: The Conference of Atlantic Medical Students”, thoughtfully reflects on a student-led intercampus initiative and highlights the spirit of connection that has become synonymous with the Dalhousie medical student experience. The cover art, a striking architectural rendering of the Sir Charles Tupper Medical Building by DMJ Layout Editor Josh McKenna, reinforces this theme by inviting you to imagine the inner workings of our medical school.

The expansion of Dalhousie Medical School to three campuses is a significant development in the school's 157-year history, ushering in an exciting new chapter for healthcare delivery and medical education in the Maritimes. Fittingly, this issue of the Dalhousie Medical Journal debuts a new visual identity—a clean, modern design that we hope will bring a renewed energy to these pages. We look forward to featuring the voices of our CBMC colleagues in future issues of the Dalhousie Medical Journal.

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