History of Canadian Anaesthesia

Donald A. Warren (1899–1971)

As the years go by and as memories of early 20th-century anaesthesia and anaesthetists fade into the dim remembrances of more than a century past, it is well to remember former colleagues and predecessors whose dedication and service otherwise leave them as unsung heroes. One of these was Donald Warren, who gave over half a century of devoted service to his native city of Hamilton and over a decade of military service to his country.

Donald Warren was born in Hamilton in 1899 and died there in 1971. He was educated in Hamilton Public Schools and the University of Toronto and interned in Hamilton General Hospital before practising for a short period in Dunnville, Ontario. Then, in the early days of World War I he joined the Royal Warwickshire Regiment as Medical Officer. For gallantry he was awarded the Military Cross. In 1918 he was transferred to the Canadian Army Medical Corps.

With the war over, Warren decided to practise anaesthesia back home. To prepare himself, he took training in the leading centres of Cleveland, Toledo and Madison. He returned to Hamilton in 1919, where, with Dr. William Cody, he inaugurated the anaesthetic service at Hamilton General Hospital. In due course he became chief there, as well as staff anaesthetist at St. Joseph's Hospital and at the Hamilton Sanitarium. He also served as chairman of the Medical Board of the General and, in 1932 and 1933, president of the Hamilton Academy of Medicine.

War returned, and in 1940 Dr. Warren was recalled to active service. During the next few years he commanded Chorley Park Military Hospital (from 1940 to 1943), No. 2 Canadian General Hospital (1943–1945), Camp Borden Military Hospital (1945–1946) and the DVA Hospital in Hamilton (1946–1947). He retired from military service with the rank of Colonel, and took up practice once again in Hamilton. From 1946 to 1964 he also served his city as Coroner.

Dr. Warren was one of the first anaesthetists to be certified by the Royal College, and he was a Fellow, and later a member of the Board of Governors, of the In-

ternational College of Anaesthetists. He was a member of the Canadian Anaesthetists' Society and a Life Member of the Ontario Medical Association.

Dr. Warren retired in 1964. He had given a lifetime of solid service to Canadian anaesthesia, and in practising his art according to the standards of the day he not only served his patients well but contributed to the improvement of standards of Canadian anaesthesia that took place in peace and war. Sir Andrew Macphail, a leader of the Canadian medical profession in Warren's day, said that "the remembrance of any life, rich and fresh, should not be lost to the world," and it is with this sentiment in mind that we remember Dr. Warren's life and of so many of those of his colleagues who, though unknown to us, collectively smoothed the path for us to follow.

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