

## Heather Armson MD CCFP FCFP

*The relationship's the thing, the forging of a bond, the making of a connection, the development of sharing, the interest in how things have been going and the curiosity about how they will go; medicine is often not about the solving of problems but the discussion of them, and it's the relationship that makes the doctor, not the other way around, and Dr Armson, with previous degrees in psychology and education, understands that the patients of her practice need her, a relatable human being, in order to get well, or at least to have a forum for their disorders. Dr Armson is so passionate about relationships she trains remedial residents about the nature of relationship, about how one person approaches another person, about how one person can come to know things about another person beyond medical data and fact and into genuine appreciation, that every encounter is an opportunity for growth, that even the most difficult of encounters teaches physicians something about themselves.*

*She has a patient who has countless comorbidities, a two-time transplant recipient with numerous infections and amputations, the kind of patient that doctors test out of uncertainty, and it's her relationship with this patient, this chronically ill man, that has made a difference in his life: he has told her, and his family has told her, that just by knowing his context, just by knowing his living situation and his difficulties and his frustration with a system that inflicts upon him countless specialists, she has changed his life through the validation of suffering.*

*This passion for relationships has developed into an academic pursuit: Dr Armson has trained physicians in Kenya about relationships, had to develop relationships with Muslim male physicians in a Muslim male world, had to develop a self-sustaining system in which these physicians would nurture one another's curiosity and provide mutual assessment; these physicians have had to learn evidence-based practice and it wouldn't, couldn't, happen unless Dr Armson developed a relationship with them, the heart in the evidence-based machine. The program is still running, and the fact that it's running, and being continually assessed itself, is a testament to the relationships she's fostered, and the kind of family medicine she practises. ❁*

Cover photo: Terence Law, Calgary, Alta

Story: Shane Neilson MD CCFP, Erin, Ont

Additional photos and the French translation of the story appear on page 118.

D'autres photos et la traduction en français du récit se trouvent à la page 118.

**THE COVER PROJECT** *Canadian Family Physician* has embarked on a project to assemble the portrait of family medicine in Canada. Each cover of the journal will feature a family physician chosen at random from our membership list, along with a short essay—a brief glimpse of the person and the practice. Over time, the randomness will become representative and the differences, taken together, will define what it is that all family physicians have in common.

*Inside half-cover (IHC)*