

Barbara Dyble MD CCFP FCFP

N=1: powerful for the individual. When did Dr Dyble first make a decision about what to be in her life? Life makes the decision first: all through her young life, Dr Dyble was dreamy and disorganized, inefficient at her work, inattentive. At age twelve, her mother decided Dr Dyble should have a summer camp experience—the first time she'd be away from her family for a significant period. At a horse camp where girls were boarded, Dr Dyble spent a week in a cabin tormented by much older girls. The horses were beautiful, but the people did not live up to that kind of beauty. Dr Dyble was scheduled to go to a Christian camp the next week; she was terrified that she'd have a similar experience. But on arrival, when she met the intake counselor, she felt hit, physically, by the atmosphere of contentment and happiness. That night, sitting with other children and singing songs around a campfire, guitars plucking the strings of stars, she decided: I want what is on offer here. She has practised as a Christian ever since, initially becoming involved in Young Life, an evangelical Christian youth group. Her undergraduate days were spent deciding upon a career in either theology or medicine.

Hard to know when vocation begins and avocation ends, or when they are the same.

Dr Dyble entered the University of Calgary, a medical school that had shifted away from a didactic curriculum, a place that fit her learning style. During a pediatrics rotation she spent a lot of time with a teenage girl dying from congenital heart disease. Much of the time spent with the girl was therapeutic time: the teenager was terminal, but there was so much to learn about her life before she died.

Dr Dyble spent a year practising family medicine in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, where the lesson of the heart-diseased teenager was reinforced: so much more important than pharmacological or surgical intervention is the intervention of time spent with the doctor who is present for the patient.

While in Vancouver she met an old friend from Young Life. The friend's brother had just died of leukemia. Dr Dyble remembers feeling able to only relate to her friend as a doctor, and not as a friend. This provoked a crisis of faith in medicine, causing Dr Dyble to rethink her approach to being a doctor. Furthering this change of heart was the development of several illnesses in Dr Dyble's own family that she feels weren't being addressed completely by traditional medicine. Dr Dyble remembers reading nutritional literatures for the first time and feeling angry that she wasn't aware of their applicability and usefulness before.

This feeling developed into a minor evangelism: she is now trained in functional medicine, which approaches problems in an integrated way (as opposed to the traditional organ-specific way) and addresses problems primarily through lifestyle counseling (nutrition, exercise, environment). Dr Dyble feels her own success in the field derives from the work of other functional medicine practitioners who came before her, the $n > 1$ that encouraged her to create a functional medicine clinic at the University of Victoria. 🌿

Cover photo: Cathie Ferguson, Victoria, BC

Story: Shane Neilson MD CCFP, Erin, Ont

Additional photos and the French translation of the story appear on page 1158.

D'autres photos et la traduction en français du récit se trouvent à la page 1158.