

Peter Robbins MD CCFP FCFP

The only Canadian in Japan when the first atomic bomb dropped: John Ford was working in a metals factory outside Hiroshima and was thrown up and out, against a wall; the bright light that was a dark mark, or, the end of the war.

He had a girlfriend back home. He survived, was reunited with her, and they have been married for 68 years. When his wife became quite sick with a cough, Mr Ford called his family doctor, Dr Robbins. Mr Ford has the doctor's cell.

At the housecall, Dr Robbins diagnosed pneumonia, prescribed antibiotics. But he also did something more important: he looked at Mr Ford, our only witness to a cataclysm, and said: "I think she'll be alright."

Mr Ford knew he could call the doctor, that the doctor would come, that the doctor would try to do the right thing. In addition to all this he also knew that the doctor would tell him that the worry for a love carried over 68 years is, in this case, not necessary.

"If things change, then call me."

Dr Robbins practised in a small town in Nova Scotia before he moved to Newfoundland for good. He was recruited by his 2 uncles, both doctors. These uncles showed him how to be a doctor, to look the part by acting the part to be the part. He remembers listening to patients tell him about his uncles, about how his uncles had made a difference in patients' lives by making the right diagnosis or by investing the proper amount of time. His uncles showed Dr Robbins a way to talk to patients: you can tell me, because I want to help you. Lockport was served by Robbins doctors for over 47 years.

A few weeks ago Dr Robbins met a young woman of 19 in the emergency department at St Clare's Hospital in St John's. She had waited for an hour in the waiting room. The chart listed her chief complaint as diarrhea.

When he entered the curtained-off area, she appeared to be nauseated in her bed, doubled-over and retching. He noticed the woman's mother sitting to the side. The mother said nothing.

The young woman's diarrhea had lasted for a few hours' duration. Dr Robbins took a history and proceeded to examine the woman. Her belly was quite protuberant and he remarked on this to the woman. The mother said, "Just got like that this morning."

Dr Robbins examined the vagina. There was a head in the vaginal canal.

Dr Robbins informed the pregnant woman she was pregnant.

The pregnant woman denied it.

Her diarrhea was the rupture of membranes. The pregnant woman didn't believe it.

Dr Robbins asked about her periods. The pregnant woman said she had had normal periods the past 9 months, yes. He asked her the last time she had sex. "Over 9 months ago," she said.

Gentle communication: Dr Robbins wheeled over the ultrasound machine. After putting the fluid on her abdomen, he showed the woman a head and a beating heart.

An hour later, a healthy baby boy. 🍁

Cover photo: Ned Pratt, St John's, Nfld

Story: Shane Neilson MD CCFP, Erin, Ont

Additional photos and the French translation of the story appear on page 102.

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