

Gerald Kenefick MB BCH BAO CCFP FCFP

*Dr Kenefick's father was a general practitioner in Cork, Ireland, and often took Dr Kenefick on morning housecalls before his son was old enough to go to school—and the curious boy heard what the visit was about on the way to the next housecall. His father's occupation was a source of wonder to Dr Kenefick, a door-opening job that Dr Kenefick was always set on doing himself. His father's work expanded beyond family practice so that his dad became physician to the rail transport company *Córas Iompair Éireann*, an occupational medicine position "plus"—Dr Kenefick's dad was responsible for the rail employees, delivering their babies and all the rest that comes with comprehensive general practice. The perk of the job was free rail tickets to anywhere in Ireland.*

Dr Kenefick remembers one gruesome instance when his dad was called to a rail yard. The doctor found a man pinned under rolling stock, his pelvis crushed under a wheel. The man's wife was called and she had a chance to visit her husband. They both knew that he would die, which he did in tens of seconds once the stock was removed.

After becoming a doctor at the age of 23, Dr Kenefick worked a short locum for his father in Cork. While there, he took care of men who worked for the railway, completing that family circle.

In 1969, he came to Canada. He started work in family practice but after 9 years became a doctor for BC Tel and CN Rail, where he learned the ropes of real occupational medicine. One day on the fifth floor of the BC Tel building, he received a call from the ground—a Brink's security guard got shot while transporting cash. Dr Kenefick and his nurses attended the security guard on the ground, checking his vitals and dressing the wounds—entry in the abdomen, exit out the back. An ambulance took the security guard to hospital and he survived, although less than a year later Dr Kenefick read in the newspaper that the guard died in a similar situation—robbery and shooting while making a pickup on the job.

Dr Kenefick currently has a family practice and he also works as an occupational health doctor for several small companies, including rail companies, in the province of British Columbia. Much of his work is sorting through drug and alcohol testing requirements and infractions as standardized by the US Department of Transportation's guidelines. Dr Kenefick believes that work in a person's life is essential—the resultant financial and mental benefits of the productive routine a requirement for a healthy life.

Every profession has its classic hazard: a doctor makes a mistake and suffers a crisis in confidence and it could make him a better doctor or make him less effective and defensive, for example. The hazard of railway engineers is the "near miss" or collision on level crossings. The trains are too massive to stop quickly, and Dr Kenefick describes the change in engineers who have hit cars and vans and trucks, usually through no fault of the operators. Some engineers return to work after their incident with relatively little difficulty, but others might never return to that job. 🌻

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 1124.

D'autres photos et la traduction en français du récit se trouvent à la page 1124.