

In Memoriam: Dr. William Douglas Hitchings, 1923-1988

William Douglas Hitchings was a pioneer in Orthomolecular medicine, practicing for forty years in Montreal and New York. He died earlier this year in Montreal. This memorial was submitted on behalf of his grateful patients.

To his patients William Douglas Hitchings was a man of extraordinary professional skill, dedication, and compassion. Those fortunate enough to be under his care experienced an unequalled quality of medical care complemented by great kindness and understanding. For Dr. Hitchings brought to his practice of medicine a depth of humanity which raised far above the ordinary the treatment and care he gave to his patients. They knew instinctively that they could trust his fine professional judgment and ethical sense. Nobility of character is a rare virtue, and easy to deride, yet no other phrase can so aptly describe Dr. Hitchings' approach to medicine and to life itself. He had in abundance the so-called "old-fashioned" virtues: wisdom, honesty, sincerity, humility, fortitude, patience, forbearance and hope. He was slow to anger, self-effacing and supremely tolerant of human frailty.

His dedication to his patients was absolute, and shown in many ways, large and small. He had the courage to practice a form of medicine, Orthomolecular medicine, which is ahead of its time, and therefore rejected or at least ridiculed by many. But what other people thought never deterred him from doing what he believed in. He had no interest in gaining public recognition or esteem. All his efforts went towards helping his patients by

exploring possible treatments and new developments in his field and by sharing his hard-won knowledge with others. In small but important ways, too, he demonstrated his concern for his patients — by creating a pleasant professional environment, by treating them with respect and consideration, and by being unfailingly courteous and punctilious.

Dr. Hitchings gave the impression of strength — of physical, emotional, and spiritual strength. As a Quaker, he drew his strength from a deep religious faith. His demeanor, physical and verbal, was marked by a serenity which revealed his belief in the transitory nature of life on earth. One of his favourite poems was T. S. Eliot's "Burnt Norton", which discourses on the theme of time: its elusiveness, its permanence, its various dimensions, and, above all, its eternity. Some lines from the poem are an appropriate epitaph to a man who spent his lifetime in service to his fellow man and to God.

Time past and time future
Allow but a little consciousness.
But only in time can the moment in the
 rose-garden,
The moment in the arbour where the rain
 beat,
The moment in the draughty church at
 smokefall
Be remembered; involved with past and
 future.
Only through time time is conquered.

— From his grateful patients