

Ask any young woman doctor in Canada to cite her role model.

There's usually only one answer.

Hamilton's **Dr. May Cohen**.

Cohen is a legend at home and internationally as a caring family physician, passionate crusader for women's issues, and a pioneer.

For her outstanding lifelong achievements, she has received prestigious awards, including the Governor General's Award in Commemoration of the Persons Case.

"It's getting to be a weekly event," quips her husband, Gerry, a prominent Hamilton family physician in his own right.

Considered a remarkable woman by most, **Cohen** capped her long list of honours with a new achievement yesterday.

McMaster University and Eli Lilly Canada announced the creation of The Eli Lilly Canada-**May Cohen** Chair in Women's Health.

The pharmaceutical company is supporting the chair with a \$1-million contribution over five years to support research into women's health.

There are now 26 chairs at McMaster created by the university's current fundraising campaign. Each chair is supported by at least \$1 million in outside funding, which is matched by the university.

"It means a tremendous amount to me," **Cohen** said, adding it's an important step forward in understanding the special health problems women face.

A national search is currently under way to recruit the first holder of the chair.

The focus of the chair will be on conducting epidemiological research and clinical trials that address the prevalence of women's health problems, and the social and educational determinants that influence them.

Cohen admits her thinking has changed since her days as a young doctor when she believed there were few differences in women's and men's health.

"We've come a long way in understanding women's health in terms of biology and the broader determinants of health," she said. "Women's health is not just differences in biology but in the context of women's lives -- their economic status, education and living conditions."

Her hope is the new chair in her name will advance the knowledge on what contributes to women's health and illness. She said that effort will not be compromised by a large donation from a drug company.

"Research is academically driven. The real issue is that there isn't enough research money in Canada, and contributions from pharmaceutical companies are important."

Dr. Russell Joffe, dean and vice-president of health sciences at McMaster, said, "Throughout her career, **Dr. Cohen** has advanced the cause of women's health and of women in her profession.

"The creation of this chair will allow McMaster to honour her important contributions by continuing our leadership in this field."

Gaetano Crupi, president of Eli Lilly Canada, said his company is committed to helping women live longer, healthier and more active lives.

"The choice of naming the chair in honour of **Dr. Cohen** was not as difficult as you would have thought," he said.

Each year of **Cohen's** 40-year medical career has brought new issues and problems. These have included: Encouraging women to enter medicine; removing barriers to advancement; doctors abusing patients; creating university curriculum that reflects women's needs; and establishing the Women's Health Office at McMaster -- the first office of its kind in Canada.

A former associate dean and professor in McMaster's faculty of health sciences, she served as chair of the Canadian Medical Association's gender issues committee and as president of the Federation of Medical Women of Canada.

Cohen says that of all her accomplishments, her greatest pride is her family which includes sons, Eric, Stuart and Russell.

Her family said yesterday the feeling is mutual.

This story and related Web sites can be found at www.hamiltonspectator.com.

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Morrison, Suzanne. "1M chair to focus on women's health; McMaster and Eli Lilly decision pays tribute to physician May Cohen." *Hamilton Spectator, The (Ontario, Canada)*, FINAL ed., sec. News, 2 June 2000, p. A08. *NewsBank: Access World News*, infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/10AF0001B799053B. Accessed 1 Nov. 2022.

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