

Dr. May Cohen, a Hamilton family physician renowned for her work in women's health care, will receive one of the prestigious Governor General's Awards in Commemoration of the Persons Case.

She is one of six women from across Canada being honored this year.

Dr. Cohen, an associate dean at McMaster University respected for her efforts to advance the health concerns of women and promote gender equality within the medical profession, will receive the award at Rideau Hall in Ottawa next month.

The awards were instituted in 1979 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Canadian women receiving legal recognition as "persons" by saluting those who have made outstanding contributions to the advancement of women.

Five other women, whose names have not yet been released, were selected from 63 nominees.

EQUALITY

The award honors **Dr. Cohen's** "outstanding contributions in promoting the equality of women in Canada" and she said she is thrilled to receive it.

Personally, she feels the award also recognizes the importance of addressing the issues of women's health, the efforts of a large network of devoted colleagues and "the important role the increasing numbers of women in medicine play in promoting and maintaining women's health."

Recipients of the award receive a bronze medallion designed by Toronto sculptor and medal designer Dora de Pedery-Hunt and a sterling silver lapel pin. It is not a cash award.

"She deserves it," said her proud husband, **Dr. Gerry Cohen**, a professor of family medicine at McMaster University with a practice at the North Hamilton Community Health Centre.

Dr. Cohen said his wife's decision to dedicate her life to improving women's health goes back 20 years.

"We'd been in practice for 17 years in Downsview and, when we came to McMaster in 1976, she said that one of her goals was to dedicate herself to the advancement of women's health."

Dr. May Cohen, 64, is associate dean of health services in the faculty of health sciences at McMaster University, past president of the Federation of Medical Women of Canada and a past chair of the Canadian Medical Association's gender issues committee.

Her colleagues say that, as a physician, researcher, educator, administrator and activist, she's been a wonderful role model to young physicians, both male and female.

"Over the years, I've found she's had the courage of her convictions to stand up for women's health and to promote it in spite of the odds that she faced in a male-dominated atmosphere," said **Dr. Shajia Kahn** of Ottawa, FMWC's immediate past president.

COURAGE

"Where politically, it might have been to her advantage to sort of go with the boys, she didn't, and perhaps she lost out because of that, but she stood up for what she believes in and I think that took courage," she said.

Dr. Shelley Rechner, an assistant professor of family medicine at McMaster, said an astonishing number of

women physicians across Canada have taken their careers in exciting new directions because of **Dr. Cohen's** inspiration.

In 1986, **Dr. Cohen** received a Hamilton Woman of the Year award in the field of health, sports and fitness. The College of Family Physicians of Canada named her the W. Victor Johnson Orator for 1993-94. In August, the FMWC honored her for her lifetime of leadership.

At McMaster, **Dr. Cohen** has taken a lead in addressing gender equality, sexual harassment, sexual abuse of patients by physicians, gay and lesbian issues, the role of women in the medical profession and women's health.

She founded and now chairs the Women's Health InterSchool Curriculum Committee, a committee representing Ontario's five medical schools committed to raising the awareness of the biological issues which impact on women's health.

Dr. Cohen is co-founder of the Women's Health Office at McMaster, the first such office to be established in a health science faculty in Canada.

Of all her titles, one she holds dear is "Bubie," the name the two grandsons she adores call her.

CITATION (MLA STYLE)

Morrison, Suzanne. "Doctor honored: One of six women across Canada." *Hamilton Spectator, The (Ontario, Canada)*, FINAL ed., sec. Metro, 21 Sept. 1995, p. B2. *NewsBank: Access World News*, infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&doref=news/10B2FD89ADE6DAC0. Accessed 1 Nov. 2022.

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