

Profiles in Kidney Care – November 2007

Lai Lin Harvalias received Wilma Crockett Memorial Award

“Team member, role model, and leader” is how co-workers described Fraser Health Dietitian Practice Leader Lai Lin Harvalias when they nominated her for the 4th annual Wilma Crockett Memorial Award this year.



Lai Lin, who was presented with the award at Nephrology Days on October 12th, is quick to put the praise into perspective, however. “I’m really pleased about the recognition – but I like to think that it’s really about recognition for dietitians across the province, and the role we play in renal care,” she says.

The Wilma Crockett Memorial Award, presented annually at Nephrology Days in honour of the dedicated nurse (a hemodialysis patient herself) who passed away in 2001, recognizes health professionals who have made an “outstanding lifetime contribution to excellence in renal care.” The award is doubly meaningful to Lai-Lin, who worked with Wilma on a number of initiatives. “I feel so privileged to have had the opportunity to share ideas with her,” she says.

At the award presentation, Lai-Lin was praised for her tireless efforts – over more than 30 years – to promote renal nutrition provincially and nationally. Among her achievements are developing criteria for Canada’s first nutrition supplement program for renal patients, contributing to the development of BC’s first nutritional care standards for renal patients, creating innovative renal recipes, and producing user-friendly patient education materials. She also advocated successfully for having renal dietitians reclassified as clinical specialists, and was the first renal clinical specialist dietitian in BC.

For Lai-Lin, these achievements are “all in a day’s work.” “I think part of it is being in the right place at the right time,” she says. “When I started in renal care, there wasn’t a lot in place for dietitians, so you are automatically in the position of being innovative no matter what you come up with!”

That said, she does not downplay the significant positive changes in the renal dietitian community over the years. “In the early years there were just seven of us in the province, and now there are over 50,” she says. “We meet monthly and I can’t say enough about this group – whenever I put a call out for help on an initiative I get immediate response from willing volunteers.”



Future priorities for Lai-Lin include standardizing provincial renal mineral metabolism guidelines, finalizing the intradialytic parenteral nutrition (related to feeding patients through their veins during dialysis to improve their nutritional status) guidelines, translating the provincial renal nutrition guidelines into a number of different languages, and renewing the focus on research. "There's no doubt that renal dietitians do excellent work and that it makes a difference to patient outcomes and experience," she says. "Now we just need to do a better job of evaluating our practice, publishing the results and contributing to the renal care-related knowledge transfer."