

Profiles in Kidney Care – March 2009

Profile: Doug King is retiring soon... sort of

After nearly 25 years as a biomedical engineer at St. Paul's Hospital, and involvement with the BC Renal Agency since its launch in 1998, Doug King is set to retire in May.

"I am one of the few people on the FEPG (facilities and equipment planning group) who's been there right from the beginning," says Doug.

It's a role he clearly has enjoyed. As a biomedical engineer providing service to all medical programs, Doug says he has a good perspective on the renal program, which he calls "the most provincially organized program" in BC.

"My work with the renal agency has been one of the most rewarding areas of my career because the renal community really functions like a community," says Doug. "The other programs don't function that way."

Doug says the work of the FEPG, in establishing provincial standards for equipment and facilities, enables the most effective use of capital resources.

"For example," says Doug, "before we set the standard of four hemodialysis machines for every three stations, the ratio of machines to stations was different in every facility. Some people had way too many machines and some didn't have enough."

Doug says the nature of dialysis technology has made the renal program a primary focus for his work as a biomedical engineer.

"Hemodialysis technology is ten times more maintenance intensive than any other technology in health care," says Doug. "The equipment is always having to be serviced, maintained and inspected, which takes a lot of time."

At the same time, he has found this work very satisfying.

"What makes renal unique is that the patients are long-term," says Doug. "They come back week after week for years and years. And because these patients would die without dialysis, you get a sense that you really are making a difference by helping to keep them alive and maintaining the quality of their lives."

This summer Doug is taking an extended vacation with his wife, driving their RV through the American southwest. But he is only allowing himself six months vacation at most, before returning home to look for another job.





"I plan to work for another five to seven years," says Doug, who turns 60 this year. "I started my career in my mid-thirties, so I need to work to augment my pension."

He doesn't know what kind of work it will be. It could be a return to biomedical engineering or it could be in alternative energy, an area of interest since engineering school in the early 1980s. With global demand for alternative energy sources now at a high, the timing could be right for a whole new career direction for Doug.