

**SAVING & REMEDIATION of the VGH MEDICAL RECORDS, 2013:** exploring  
the role played by the VGH Nurses Alumni & members of the AHSAMNS

To start at the beginning for the 'VGH Medical Records' story – sometime in the late 1980's or early 1990's a VG graduate, Elizabeth Brown, noticed the Housekeeping members had many old large binders on a wagon and became curious. On investigating she realized that the binders contained patient records and questioned what was to become of these records. When told they were being taken to the incinerator, she stopped this from happening and arranged to have all the binders stored in the VGH School of Nursing Archives, in the cage designated in the sub-basement of the MacKenzie building. Thus, she saved the records from complete destruction and these records remained in the VGH Nurses archives for over 20 years.

In 2007, there was a concern that the VGH Nurses Archives may be removed, thus a committee was formed by Gloria Stephens titled; 'Save the Archives', made up of several VGH graduates. Over time, Dr. Ed Kinley and Dr. Allan Marble were invited to join the committee. Eventually as more members, other than VG Graduates, joined the committee, the name was changed in 2009 to 'Association of Health Sciences Archives & Museums of Nova Scotia (AHSAMNS)'. Eventually, there was an interest in the VGH medical records by Allan Marble as to what should become of them and to be better protected.

The following story relates the highlights of the handling of the VGH medical records.

The remediation of the VG Medical Records from the sub basement of the MacKenzie building, which were stored in the VG School of Nursing Archives since 1997, was commenced through the Association of Health Sciences Archives and Museums of Nova Scotia. Gloria Stephens and Dr. Allan Marble had a meeting in May with the CEO of Capital Health, Chris Power to investigate the possibility of financial assistance to restore these records. A room was secured in the Royal Bank, Barrington Towers, to store the medical records once cleaned.

June 19, 2013, Gloria Stephens organized with Joanne Lu to randomly take cultures of the records. The report of the cultures was received June 27 which stated that several of the unwrapped records did in fact contain mould. After many emails back and forth a meeting was held in the office of Don Currie, Bethune building, July 8. Attending this meeting was Don, Ed Kinley, Allan Marble, Iris Shea, Joanna Lu and Gloria Stephens. The agenda covered the results of the cultures and what was the best method to clean the records. The results: 1)Allan Marble and Gloria Stephens to meet with Chris Power confirming that financial assistance was available; ask for manual assistance to help with the move of the books and to invite Power to view the books and the VG Archives; 2). Gloria to investigate companies who could do the remediation of the records.

July 11, Gloria contacted 10 companies and only two in the city would be able to do the remediation of the records: Service Master, Paul Patterson & Maritime Remediation, Laurie Conrad. Gloria organized individual meetings with Paul and Laurie to view the

records and requested from each, an estimate of cost, method that will be used and time required to do the job.

July 15<sup>th</sup> a meeting was held in the VG School of Nursing Archives with Chris Power, Don Currie, Allan Marble, Ed Kinley and Gloria Stephens to discuss the actions required to preserve the records and to view the condition of the records in the sub basement.

Gloria compiled the report of the two estimates and forwarded to Cathy Stone, Assistant to Chris Power.

Chris Power confirmed that financial assistance was available based on the estimates for the remediation. Space was also made available in the Royal Bank through Capital Health, which was a large room and office equipment was available.

As all these negotiations were occurring, time passed quickly and because we were unable to use the room at the Royal Bank, the room was given to someone else, August 19. Another area was found, August 21, in the Barrington Towers on the 15<sup>th</sup> floor, with Manager, Bill Chaffey. This is considerably smaller area but will be adequate to at least store the records before 1914.

August 22, the company chosen to do the remediation, that being Maritime Remediation under Laurie Conrad. This information was sent to Cathy Stone to obtain a work order PO #. Also, August 22 a letter was sent to Chris Power, from AHSAMNS Secretary as a thank you for all the assistance in getting the medical records looked after.

The process for the PO# took a week or so. In the meantime, Gloria called a meeting, September 12, with Allan and Laurie to determine the process involved, methods to be used and established a start date. After several emails the PO# was obtained.

The Board was informed as to the progress by Gloria, AHSAMNS Secretary via email and also informed the members that the original space was lost but another space was set aside in the Barrington towers. October 4, Allan, Gloria and Iris met with Bill Chaffey and Jennifer Nopper to determine if the space allotted would be sufficient, and also determined the method to be used for the transfer of these records. The space is very limited both for storage and to be able to function to any degree while working on these records. The first records to be moved here will be the ones dated before 1914. To store the complete collection of records, more space will be required. *The big question remains- what will happen to the records dated after 1914 and who is to determine the authority over all these records? Who will be given access to these records? What will the controls be and who to administer such rules?*

October 7<sup>th</sup>.the cleaning of the records began by setting up separate rooms made of plastic and with blowers to create a positive pressure area. This room was located in the VG Nurses Archives storage area. One door to the records area and another door to transfer the records from this room to the storage room which was located in the



Medical History Society storage area. This room had one double door and also positive pressure.



VG NURSES STORAGE AREA



MEDICAL HISTORY SOCIETY STORAGE

Above picture to the right - the VG School of Nursing Archives storage area after the special plastic room was removed.

As the records were delivered to the Medical History Society storage space they were separated into two groups, one group dated before 1914 and those dated after 1914. Here shows the records within the special storage area.



The area to left in this picture is the double door to go outside. Note the black hole to the right in the next picture— air is being blown into the room. Even the floor was covered with the plastic to protect the clean records.



Not all the records were from the VG as seen here, a few boxes from the Infirmary and Camp Hill hospitals.



The STORED MEDICAL RECORDS

The procedure to clean all the medical records took a week to complete.

For various reasons a decision was made to change from Able Movers to Maritime Remediation Company to complete the job of moving the records from the Medical History Society storage area to a designated area in the Barrington Towers. At the completion of the move a letter from Laurie Conrad, Maritime Remediation Company was delivered to Bill Chaffey, Manager Health & Wellness Financial Services, indicating that all the medical records met the environmental regulations. A date for the move of the records was October 31, 2013, with Allan and Gloria acting as a resource.

The move took all day as there was a very steep ramp that the records had to be pushed up and because of weight, not too many books could be moved at once, and it took both men.



Packing the truck

(Pictures, by G. Stephens)



THE MOVERS UNLOADING, ALLAN MARBLE observing

Not long after the records of before 1914 were moved to the Barrington Towers than we were told they had to be removed. Negotiations again were necessary as to what should become of these particular records, so back they came to the storage area in the sub-basement of the MacKenzie building. Allan Marble eventually negotiated with the NS Archives who agreed to take the records which met the criteria of privacy, that being that individuals recorded in these binders would have been dead for 50 years. The cage for the Medical History Society was quite empty so the company made another protected room of plastic that had positive pressure and all the remaining records were moved from the VGH Nurses cage to the Medical History cage with the help of Allan, Iris Shea and Gloria. The change of cage was made because the nurse's cage had damp areas. As the remaining records meet the privacy criteria they will be removed and stored in the NS Archives, available for medical historians to review.

Submitted by; Gloria Stephens  
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