

In 1992, Dr. Kent Bernes came to Barrhead to get a few years of experience as a family physician and then move on to a big city to pursue his dream of becoming a pediatrician.

That was the plan.

However, soon after he started his rural practice, he recognized the many opportunities rural medicine had to offer.

Over the course of his 30 years in Barrhead, he's participated in many aspects of medical care in the community.

He loved delivering babies and practised obstetrics in Barrhead for 15 years.

Dr. Bernes also took extra training in cardiology and provided cardiac care to local residents.

He's a phenomenal physician, but he's also a wonderful friend to all of us. - Dr.
Leonard Krantz

Later in his career, he trained in oncology and became certified as a General Practitioner in Oncology.

Today, he is one of three physicians at the Barrhead Community Cancer Centre. With the support of the Cross Cancer Institute in Edmonton, they provide chemotherapy and immunotherapy treatments for local cancer patients.



Dr. Kent Bernes (L) meets with Sherri-May Hotchkiss, Site Manager (C) and Michelle Smith, RN (R) during his morning rounds at the Barrhead Healthcare Centre.

“To be able to offer that kind of care in a holistic, caring environment with a one-on-one approach is such a gift to people who are dealing with one of the worst diagnoses probably of their whole entire life,” said Sherri-May Hotchkiss, Site Manager, Barrhead Healthcare Centre.

“I know the patients love [receiving treatments in their own community],” added Dr. Bernes.

“They get to know the docs. They get to know the nursing staff. They don’t have to drive all the way to the city.”

The work is fulfilling, and the opportunities are immense. – Dr. Kent Bernes

In addition to providing direct patient care, Dr. Bernes is Barrhead's Community Medical Director. As part of this role, he's involved in the attraction and retention of new physicians, as well as introducing new programs and improving existing ones at the Barrhead Healthcare Centre.

As an example, Dr. Bernes was instrumental in expanding the Surgical Services Program and actively sought out visiting surgeons to support that program.



Dr. Bernes checks the ear of Jenny Bruns, a patient at Barrhead Clinic where Dr. Bernes practises as a rural family physician.

His colleagues love working with him.

"He's a very colourful character," said fellow Barrhead Clinic family physician, Dr. Leonard Krantz, with a smile.

"He's a phenomenal physician, but he's also a wonderful friend to all of us. The great thing

about Kent is his outgoing personality which makes it fun to work with him.”

“You know he’s not just a physician, he’s friends with the patients he cares for,” shared Linda Wolfram, former Site Manager, Barrhead Healthcare Centre.

“He really takes that time to listen to them. He’s very empathetic and compassionate. He’s very, very knowledgeable. He gives excellent care, and he just exemplifies everything that a rural physician is.”



Dr. Kent Bernes and his wife Donna Bernes are foodies. They love entertaining. Donna grew up in Barrhead and her father, Dr. Charles Godberson, was a longtime physician in Barrhead. Donna is an occupational therapist.

Dr. Bernes is also an exceptional mentor for medical trainees who come to Barrhead for rural clerkships or residencies. He’s twice been named the University of Alberta’s Rural Preceptor of the Year.

“He’s a great teacher,” declared Paul Barber, a fourth-year medical student at the University of Alberta.

“He gives a lot of hands-on opportunities which is sometimes hard to come by, and he gives a lot of trust to his students which really empowers them.”

What is Dr. Bernes’s advice to medical students about rural practice?

“Try it,” he urges. “You just never know. You might really like it. The lifestyle out here is easy. It’s fulfilling. The work is fulfilling, and the opportunities are immense.”

Congratulations to Dr. Kent Bernes, recipient of the 2021 RhPAP Rhapsody Physician Award.