

RESEARCH SUMMARY:

# Best Practices in Medicine Cross Borders

*Dr. Lee Errett takes his skills overseas to address gaps in care.*

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Many people recall the story of SS Hope, the world's first peacetime hospital ship that set sail across the world in 1958 to improve medical care in developing communities. For Dr. Lee Errett, Project Hope is not just a fond memory, it is an inspiration.

St. Michael's Hospital's Chief of Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery, Dr. Lee Errett is the first Canadian to ever receive the Chinese Medical Association's highest honour – the Dr. Norman Bethune Award. Like the SS Hope, Dr. Errett is known for travelling the world to help improve and modernize care, especially in rural communities.

Dr. Lee Errett also shares his expertise in Cuba, where he helped set up an intensive care unit and operating room using refurbished medical equipment from Canada, and training physicians to operate it. He has also worked in Egypt where a valvular heart disease problem exists, and there are no specialists available to treat heart arrhythmias with surgery. This is in addition to co-editing the first textbook on cardiac surgery to provide a key reference for new surgeons in China.

The Terrence Donnelly Residents' Research Day, which he initiated in 1995, was voted the best cardiac surgical conference by the Cardiac Residents in Canada. In 1999, Dr. Errett established a program to train international surgeons. Four of the twenty-two trained now head their division in their native countries and have made significant changes in both education, as well as improvements in clinical care for the patients they serve. Dr. Errett recently received three awards for his innovative teaching at the hospital, university and nationwide.

But Dr. Errett's heart will always be with St. Michael's Hospital, where he has overseen the medical, research and teaching priorities of the Division of Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery for more than 14 years. "The quality of our practise at St. Michael's Hospital is enhanced by a positive environment where everyone is supportive of one another," he says. "We particularly enjoy the relationship we have with donors who are a big part of that support."

