



The AMS Phoenix Project: A Call to Caring

Healthcare has lost its way. Focused on the path of technical progress, we failed to notice the increasingly desolate landscape into which we have traveled: a landscape of treatments and techniques, assessments and efficiencies, routines and guidelines, hierarchies and regulations. Patients and their families move through this landscape neither knowing us nor feeling that we know them, as individuals with fears and desires as well as signs and symptoms. With our patients passing by in a blur and our work reduced to a frenzy of tasks, we can be deaf to the calling that brought us to healthcare: the call to caring. We grope blindly for purpose, while the absence of caring relationships in healthcare demoralizes both us and those who look to us for care.

And what of the next generations for whom the calling still sings sweetly? For whom the vision of caring still serves as a beacon? Their idealism and energy we treat with a powerful sedative: an educational environment in which caring is secondary to competence and the human relationship between health professional and patient is reduced to clinical technique.

The **AMS Phoenix Project** seeks to resurrect caring in healthcare, rebalancing human compassion and technical expertise through strategic investments to promote:

- (a) Champions for caring relationships, through training and development of current and next generation healthcare professionals, who will model and support compassionate care in their everyday work;
- (b) Creative strategies for teaching and practice that focus on caring, to be developed, investigated and shared through conferences, summits and various media; and
- (c) Communities of practice, both face-to-face and virtual, building on existing groups and developing new networks, to advance the importance of compassionate healthcare.

The **AMS Phoenix Project: A Call to Caring** began in 2011 with several successful provincial summits on the use of narrative, the role of the hidden curriculum, and the effects of toxic practice environments on medical and nursing education. With a project lead, advisory committee and a strong provincial network across Ontario's health professional schools and institutions, the **AMS Phoenix Project: A Call to Caring** will catalyze a transformation of the landscape of healthcare education and practice.

Associated Medical Services (AMS) was founded and incorporated in 1937 by Dr. Jason Hannah as Canada's first physician-sponsored, not-for-profit prepaid health care organization. When AMS's role as a healthcare provider ceased with the birth of OHIP, the Ontario Government permitted the corporation to use its remaining reserve fund for charitable purposes. That reserve fund, established from subscriber subscriptions, became the source of AMS's income as a self-funded charity.

The initial focus of AMS charity was to support scholarly activity in the history of medicine: chairs in the history of medicine, which continue today at five of the Ontario faculties of medicine/health sciences, and the Hannah Institute which administered grants and awards in the history of medicine. Subsequently, these efforts extended to the support of a number of initiatives in the history of nursing and other health professions. AMS also contributed to the advancement of the health and healthcare of Canadians in the areas of bioethics, end of life care, and medical education. In the latter domain, AMS created in the 1990s Educating Future Physicians for Ontario (AMS EFPO) a project that has had a lasting impact on the nature of medical education and a generation of physicians in Ontario. This seminal work lives on as the foundation of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada CanMEDS framework.