

Doctors share alternative medicine prize worth \$250,000

BY RICHARD J. DALTON JR., VANCOUVER SUN SEPTEMBER 25, 2009 11:01 PM



Dr. Hal Gunn, CEO of the Centre for Integrated Healing in Vancouver, in this 2004 file photo. Gunn and Dr. Badri (Bud) Rickhi of Calgary shared a \$250,000 prize designed to raise awareness of alternative health care.

Photograph by: Steve Bosch, Vancouver Sun files

VANCOUVER — Two providers of alternative and complementary health care were awarded a lucrative prize Friday night in Vancouver to recognize non-conventional health services.

The \$250,000 Prize for Achievement in Complementary and Alternative Medicine was split by Dr. Badri (Bud) Rickhi of Calgary and Dr. Hal Gunn of Vancouver.

The prize is named for Dr. Roger Hayward Rogers, who began offering alternative medicine in the 1970s and founded the Centre for Integrated Therapy in Vancouver. The prize is designed to raise awareness of complementary and alternative medicine and to recognize its practitioners.

Rickhi, who left a promising career in psychiatry in the late 1980s, treats depression using Chinese, Ayurvedic, Japanese and Tibetan medicine.

Rickhi founded the Research Centre for Alternative Medicine, now the Canadian Institute for Natural and Integrative Medicine, and also helped establish the Integrative Health Institute at Mount Royal University in Calgary.

Recently, Rickhi has focused on teen depression.

Gunn, who once practised with Rogers, expanded Rogers' Centre for Integrated Therapy, now called InspireHealth.

"He took the seed of what Dr. Rogers started and grew it into a centre that now sees hundreds of cancer patients per year," Webster said.

The biennial prize for Canadian researchers and practitioners of alternative medicine was first awarded in 2007.

Rogers' centre was designed to help cancer patients who have had little or no success with traditional medicine.

He was appointed to the Order of British Columbia in 2001 for providing alternative care to cancer patients.

The founders of the charity that funds the prize turned to Rogers in the 1970s, when Lotte Hecht was diagnosed with cancer. Rogers helped her evaluate alternative therapies.

Hecht and her husband already ran the foundation and added another objective to its goals: The investigation and support of complementary medicine in the treatment of cancer.

The majority of Canadians use alternative medicine to maintain their health, strengthen their immune systems, complement traditional therapy, or fill gaps in conventional medicine, according to a 2006 Fraser Institute study.

More than 570,000 B.C. residents aged 12 and older saw alternative health care providers in 2005, according to the most recent data available from Statistics Canada.

That's 15.8 per cent of the province's residents in that age group, compared with a rate of 13.7 per cent nationwide.

rdalton@vancouversun.com

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