

# Dr. Jo-Anne Clarke is a special breed of specialist

**At the age of 32, Dr. Jo-Anne Clarke is one of only four geriatricians in Ontario between the ages of 30 and 34.**

## **Providing care in remote areas**

Recently graduated from the University of Western Ontario, Clarke is heading up the new North East Specialized Geriatric Services in Sudbury, Ontario, the first of its kind in the region, and where Clarke was raised.

While it doesn't have the drama of the emergency room, Clarke finds her chosen specialty immensely gratifying. The needs of elderly patients are complex. She loves playing detective, trying to isolate the cause of non-specific symptoms.



## **Geriatric evaluation provides quality of care**

But good geriatric assessment can make all the difference. "My goal is not to say I'm going to make you live another 10 years, but to make the next five years as good as they can be," says Clarke.

That's especially true when treating people with dementia. Educating them about what to expect means they can plan early, making a big difference in quality of life.

## **Looking after both patient and caregiver**

Even small problems can cause pain and discomfort that someone with dementia might not be able to express, making them irritable and difficult for their caregiver to handle.

A specialist like Clarke can diagnose the problem and offer solutions for both the person with the disease and the caregiver. "In dementia, you end up with two patients. We're also physicians to the caregiver," adds Clarke.

## **More geriatric care needed**

Clarke credits a close relationship with her grandparents for her passion of working with the elderly, a passion that's welcome by the [Alzheimer Society of Sudbury-Manitoulin](#). According to Executive Director, Pat Montpetit, geriatricians are in short supply while boomers continue to age and increase their chances for dementia.

## **Reaching out for help**

[Your local Alzheimer Society](#) can guide you and your family through the progression of the disease with support groups and other practical services.

*Sharon Oosthoek is a Toronto-based freelance writer.*

*Photo of Dr. Jo-Anne Clarke by John Rennison, Hamilton, ON.*