

[Page 24 - Dr. MacPherson, the Cancer Doctor](#)

ISSUE : [Issue 7](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1974/3/1

Dr MacPherson, the Cancer Doctor Mary Barrington: He's dead and so is she. She took over after he died. And the funny part of it was, she died of cancer. She had cancer of the bladder. That was an inward, (An inward is a cancer that, ' would ', " require surgery to place the poison poultice, Dr, " MacPherson wasn't a real doctor and while he did get ' / one or two medical doctors to prescribe analgesics • painkillers • he was never able to find one who would assist him in attacking an internal cancer.) He told me that this was a faith cure that some priest had passed down. I had it. He drew it for me. I'll show you. 39 years ago. See. See the scar there, (on her chest) You couldn't tell there was anything there. Any more than that I had a pain down here, (at her side, under her arm) And I thought that's where the cancer was. He always carried the stethoscope with him. Because he said if you had a cancer that it beat] with your heart • that it would beat as your heart beats. The cancer would beat. So that's how he found out where that was. That cancer was there for six years he told me. And do you know where the root travelled? Under my arm. That's where the end of the " root was. And he used to say to me, that damned root won't let go, I was over there with the poison poultice on for nine weeks before it let go. Who knows what it was. Nobody knew that. I knew everything a- bout the treat only what was in the poison poultice. And the poultice so help me wasn't any bigger than the corner of that card. And you know what the old corn plasters used to look like, the old sticking plaster...It was black, and it was just a little thing like that. He took the lance and like he was going to vaccinate you he made a mark around here. (A six-inch circle around the cancer on her chest.) Then he put this black poultice on. Put something over it to hold it there. Mary Barrington First it sank in. About as big as I'll tell you now what it looked like when it started to come out. I'll bet you often saw the old-fashioned yeast cakes, the hard ones a fifty-cent piece. This whole thing sank in from where he circled. Then when it was dead it started coming out. And it looked • you know the old red jellyfish, the blood suckers that you see in the water • that was what it looked like on the inside. Like a bunch of stuff. And from that there was roots and roots and roots, like thread. You know what the inside of a mackerel looks like • the fine gut in a mackerel • you often saw them. The same color. Just like that. Oh thousands of them. It would come out and they would be on the back. On the back of the poultice. Well, he would dig that every morning and change the poultice. This was the second poultice. He was drawing it then with the yolk of an egg and turpentine. I saw it and drew it myself, dear. I came home to Sydney from North Sydney when he started drawing it. He told me if I wanted to I could go home but to be awful care? ful not to use that arm. In case I break a root. You see those roots are so small and the least thing'll break them off. Then if you broke a root boy, phwoosh • it would go all through you. Now where they cut a breast off or anything they don't get the whole thing. They're finished. Had to get it all. Every bit. And when you were at Dr, MacPherson he didn't want you to wash your face if you could get along with? out it, let alone have a bath. You weren't supposed to go near water. Or if there was frost on the window,



you mustn't go near it. Oh boy was he strict. He told me afterwards, there's 35 different kinds of cancer. He told me that. Some of them are harder I guess to cure. Some of them are a liquid. Some of them are bleeding cancers. He used to sit down and tell me this 'cause I used to tell him queer things, sit down and laugh. But the doctors were the devil. Unless they had somebody of their own, then they would send them over. But the steel company recognized him. They paid that. It was fifty dollars for to draw the cancer. They would also pay your board, two dollars a day, (Dr. MacPherson was also recognized by the miners; he was included on the coal company check-off, a pre-paid medical plan for doctor, drugs and hospital,) We began to collect old cures after Dr. MacMillan of Baddeck told us about sheep manure tea, a cure once in general use on Cape Breton, Others have told us it was especially good for fever and to bring out measles. We hope to offer more and would like to receive letters from our readers telling of other home remedies as practised in their part of Cape Breton. And should anyone know where a photograph of Dr. MacPherson can be seen, we would like to know of that as well. Cape Breton's Magazine/24