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## NARRATIVE REVIEW

### Dr. Roy Shephard: His Influence on the Exercise Sciences at the University of Toronto

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#### Abstract

This article examines the important role Dr. Roy Shephard played in the development of an exercise science program at the University of Toronto. It highlights the various milestones that he achieved during his time at the University of Toronto, and the legacy that he left behind upon retirement. **Health & Fitness Journal of Canada 2011;4(3):39-40.**

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#### Background

Dr. Roy Shephard's arrival at the University of Toronto in 1964 was a fundamental step forward in the development of long-standing tradition of excellence in exercise science in Canada. Universities across the world have been the benefactors of his enormous contributions, as countless faculty members and research scientists have been trained by Dr. Shephard directly, or within the graduate program that Dr. Shephard pioneered.

#### The Early Days:

Ironically, his arrival was prompted by political motivations that were quite progressive and often attributed a later era. In 1961, Bill-C131 was passed in the House of Commons, designed to promote high performance sport and mass participation in sport and physical activity. Health Canada's strategy was to establish three Fitness

Research Units across Canada, each awarded \$50,000/yr for five years. In Toronto, Dr. John Brown of Physiological Hygiene attempted to identify a researcher to lead this initiative, but failed to secure anyone locally thanks to a rapid uptake of researchers into rapidly expanding universities. A number of individuals, notably Harry Ebbs, who was Chair of the Research Committee of the National Advisory Council on Fitness and Amateur Sport, was anxious to established exercise physiology laboratories at universities across the country, and by 1964, the search extended to the UK, and Dr. Shephard responded to the call. After considerable discussion and negotiation, it was agreed that Dr. Shephard would move immediately to Toronto and set up his laboratory on a Fitness and Amateur Sport grant. His appointment was initially with Applied Physiology, School of Physical & Health Education and Department of Preventive Medicine and Biostatistics (Faculty of Medicine) and as Director of the Fitness Research Unit/Life Style Centre. His efforts led to Canada's first doctoral program in exercise physiology in 1964.

#### The Building Years:

Dr. Shephard remained the Director of the University of Toronto Graduate Programme in Exercise Sciences from 1964 to 1985. His productivity was slow to start (only 206 publications in the first 10 years),

but this picked up somewhat during the second decade (another 383 publications). The program was then formally entrenched as a Graduate Programme of Exercise Science in 1981, which at the time was administratively housed within the Department of Community Health (Faculty of Medicine). Dr. Shephard also served a 12-year term (1979 to 1991) as Director of the School of Physical and Health Education, during which time the graduate program greatly accelerated in scope, leading to an expansion of faculty to supervise the growing legions of graduate students the program attracted. Incidentally, the added burden of this administrative load limited his publication total to 518 over those 12 years.

#### Research Collaborations:

Apart from serving as a ground-breaking scientist across the fields of exercise science, Dr. Shephard acted as a nexus in a collaborative web that included numerous Canadian institutions including the Toronto Rehabilitation Centre, Brock University (Industrial Fitness and Ergonomic Studies), the Gage Research Institute (asthma and air pollution research), the Defence and Civil Institute of Environmental Medicine (environmental physiology, exercise immunology), the Toronto Hospitals (cardiac physiology), the Health Science Centre, University of Québec at Trois Rivières (longitudinal studies of child growth and development), Lyndhurst Lodge and the Centre François Charon, Québec (studies of disabled populations), the University of British Columbia (Recommendations on physical activity to Health Canada) and the Eastern Arctic Research Laboratory (population studies of the Inuit). His collaboration with the Toronto Rehabilitation Centre (TRC) is particularly noteworthy. Under the direction of Terrence Kavanagh, the TRC became and

remains a preeminent cardiac rehabilitation program. Dr. Shephard's scientific collaboration with Dr. Kavanagh and the TRC was critical not just for its clinical value to thousands of patients, but in producing research that changed the practice of exercise intervention in conventional and high-risk cardiac populations.

It is noteworthy that network of collaborations whilst being so prolific, was achieved in an era that long-preceded email and the internet, PubMed and word processing. Building the first graduate program in Canada posed similar challenges but Dr. Shephard's dedication and commitment were relentless and have not gone unnoticed. Almost 50 years have passed since his arrival in Toronto. Graduate education and exercise science research in across Canada continues to punch above its weight thanks to the standards Dr. Roy Shephard helped establish.

#### Authors' Qualifications

The author qualifications are as follows: Jack Goodman MSc, PhD; Scott Thomas MSc, PhD.