

Our History | Flip Sheet

100 YEARS OF ADVANCING URBAN HEALTH 1911 - 2011



Sir Wilfred Laurier at the official opening ceremony of the Wellesley Hospital in 1911. Dr. Bruce stands at the far left.

Humble Beginnings

In 1911 Dr. Herbert Bruce, a Toronto physician, founded the Wellesley Hospital. The private, non-profit hospital served both the city's wealthy and its poor. In the days before Medicare, Dr. Bruce believed that no one should be turned away for lack of funds, so the hospital provided affordable health care for the poor, funded through fees-for-services paid by the wealthy. The Wellesley Hospital became known for both excellent patient care and for affordable health care. During the Great Depression, Dr. Bruce — who was appointed Lieutenant Governor in recognition of his pioneering health care work — became an advocate for controversial social measures that are considered progressive today, such as housing for the poor.

The Wellesley Hospital experienced some of its most difficult times during WWI, the Great Depression, and WWII. Although financial difficulties nearly forced it to close several times, its dedicated Board and staff fought to keep the valued hospital and its well-regarded nursing school open. In 1942, the private hospital succumbed to its debt and became a public institution. Over the next 40 years, the hospital grew, both in size and in reputation.

In 1996 the Wellesley Hospital merged with Toronto's Central Hospital, which was itself noted for culturally sensitive service to immigrant communities, and the Wellesley Central Hospital was born. In 1997, Women's College Hospital also became part of Wellesley Central.

Over the years, the Wellesley Central Hospital (in its various incarnations) became known for its teaching expertise,

Historic Milestones

- 1911: Wellesley Hospital formally opens
- 1912: [First hospital wing completed](#)
- 1917: Designated a Public Hospital under the Ontario Hospital and Charitable Institutions Act
- 1932: [Dr. Bruce appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario](#)
- 1940: Dr. Bruce elected as Canadian Member of Parliament
- 1942: [Granted Public General Hospital status](#)
- 1947: Granted University of Toronto teaching hospital status
- 1948: [Becomes the Wellesley Division of the Toronto General Hospital](#)
- 1959: Regains independence from Toronto General Hospital
- 1973: [First off-site clinic opens](#)
- 1989: UofT calls for academic community health model
- 1991: [New community orientation signalled via strategic plan](#)
- 1991: Urban Health Initiative
- 1995: [District Health Council restructuring: closure proposed](#)
- 1996: Merger with Toronto Central Hospital: Wellesley Central Hospital formed
- 1997: [Merger with Women's College Hospital](#)
- 1997: Health Services Restructuring Commission's direction for closure
- 1997: [Staying Alive Campaign to save Wellesley Central](#)
- 1998: Wellesley Central Hospital ends operations
- 1999: [Wellesley Central Health Corporation is founded](#)
- 2006: Wellesley Central Health Corporation re-named The Wellesley Institute

Source: *Survival Strategies* edited by David Goyette, Dennis W. Magill and Jeff Denis

