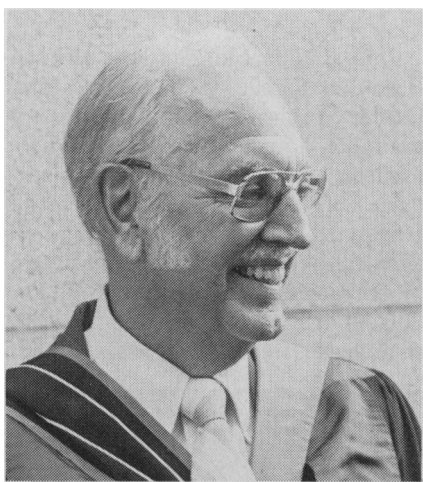


# Profile



## Norman Charles Delarue

In 1947 Dr. Norman Charles Delarue proclaimed that nobody would be smoking by 1950. While working with Dr. Evarts Graham, a pioneer in resection for lung cancer, in St. Louis, Missouri, Dr. Delarue completed the first statistically valid research project that linked cigarette smoking with lung cancer. "I didn't realize that changes in social customs take generations, not weeks or months", he reflects today. But after a lifetime's battle to publicize the dangers of smoking, Dr. Delarue can see at least a partial victory. The link between cigarettes and lung cancer is almost universally accepted.

Norman Delarue was born in Winnipeg, July 7, 1915, the only child of a Methodist minister who was determined to give his son a formal education. The family moved to Toronto, where Norman's father left the ministry and became a businessman so that he could afford to send his son first to the University of Toronto schools and then to the university itself", Dr. Delarue says. "My response was to repay him by

working hard at school." Dr. Delarue helped support his academic studies with three scholarships and received his BA in 1936 and his MD in 1939.

While in his final year at medical school Dr. Delarue decided he wanted to enter surgery — the glamorous specialty of medicine in those days. He embarked on the Gallie course, but his appointment was interrupted by the war. At first he was posted to a field ambulance, but he was later transferred to the No. 1 Canadian Mobile Neurosurgical Unit — the only unit of its type, which Dr. Delarue eventually commanded.

Despite job offers from Halifax to Vancouver on his return Dr. Delarue switched back, on Dr. Gallie's suggestion, to thoracic and general surgery. He became a resident surgeon at the Toronto General Hospital.

It was at this point that Dr. Delarue went to St. Louis for training with Dr. Evarts Graham. Dr. Graham (who was a chainsmoker himself) was at a standstill in his own research, in which he had been investigating the possibility that cancer was sex-linked. Dr. Delarue produced the first results confirming a link between cancer and cigarette smoking.

In 1948 Dr. Delarue returned to Toronto and a distinguished career as a surgeon. As a member of the breast clinic at the Toronto General Hospital, Dr. Delarue's interest in the biology of carcinoma began. In subsequent long-term studies of mastectomy for breast cancer, he and Dr. Vera Peters were among the first to show remarkable success with limited resections. Before his retirement in 1980 he was senior surgeon at Toronto General Hospital, senior consultant at the West Park, Princess Margaret and Shaver's hospitals, consultant at Women's College Hospital and the Clarke

Institute of Psychiatry and senior staff surgeon at Mount Sinai Hospital.

His lifetime crusade was the anti-smoking campaign. In the early years he felt he was knocking his head against a brick wall as he addressed voluntary health agencies, schools, church groups, the health committee of the House of Commons, medical students and anyone who would listen: "Nobody contested the evidence, but nobody gave me any support. They didn't have the time or money for a long-term, anti-smoking campaign." The turning point came in 1964, when Judy LaMarsh, minister of national health and welfare, threw the weight of her department behind the campaign. "Before that", recalls Dr. Delarue, "I had felt people regarded me as a crank. But she was a new figure of authority who tipped the scales in my favour. Then everyone — the voluntary health agencies, public health groups, the CMA — got on the band wagon."

Recognition of Dr. Delarue's efforts has come from many directions since then: he has been in great demand as a visiting professor and a guest lecturer all over the world, and has been awarded honorary life memberships in the Canadian Lung Association and the Canadian Council on Smoking and Health, a lifestyle award from the federal government, and an honorary membership of the Canadian Red Cross Society. Although he gave up all his professional commitments when he retired, he is still an active observer. In July 1983 he will be at the Fifth World Conference on Smoking and Health in Winnipeg. "It's kind of gratifying that the conference is being held in Canada, in recognition of the Canadian contribution to the field", Dr. Delarue remarks. ■

*Charlotte Gray*