

Participants



John Sumarah

John Sumarah lost his dear wife Colleen in December 2012 in Ottawa after a five-month battle with cancer. Due to the nature of the illness, and the necessity of limiting the risk of infection, John was virtually quarantined with his wife during most of the

five months. During this time he relied on the care of his daughter and son-in-law to deliver groceries and other necessities. This experience brought the couple face to face with their own vulnerability. Colleen experienced a gradual decline in her capacity to complete the normal activities of life, while John assumed the tasks of primary caregiver with the support of their daughter and palliative care providers. Despite the sorrow and grief that accompanies the end of life, John described the final five months of his wife's life as a period of intimacy in their relationship that brought them closer together.

Prior to his retirement, Dr. John Sumarah was Professor of Education and Counselling in the Faculty of Professional Studies at Acadia University in Nova Scotia, Canada. He holds a Doctorate Degree in Counseling Psychology from the University of Toronto and taught and researched at Acadia University for 29 years.

He published five books and numerous articles on Jean Vanier and the L'Arche movement and has also published in the area of counseling and ethics. He has delivered dozens of workshops in the area of education and human services related to work with persons with developmental disabilities, his interest for the past 30 years. He has worked for L'Arche in France, India and Canada serving in a number of roles including Director of Agencies, Consulting Psychologist and Board Member. He has served on numerous University, Community, Provincial and National Committees.

John's interests in retirement have included contemplation, spiritual accompaniment, and writing, along with playing a prominent role in the life of his grandson.



Dr. Catherine McNally

Dr. Catherine McNally is a palliative care physician who is blessed to be living in the Annapolis Valley, Nova Scotia, with her husband, John, and three children. She graduated with a BA from Queen's University followed by an MD in 1995 from the University of Toronto and

CCFP in 1997 from North York General Hospital. She learned palliative medicine through courses, conferences and an informal mentorship, which spanned several years. After obtaining significant experience with palliative patients, she was certified by The American Board of Hospice and Palliative Medicine in 2007. While at U of T, Catherine was a student representative on the CMDS board and has been a member for most of the time since then.

In Toronto, Catherine worked on both the short and long-term inpatient palliative care floors of Providence Centre and did some community palliative medicine as part of family practice locums. In Nova Scotia, she began with a few palliative medicine consults and, from there, was a catalyst and leader in the development of a palliative care program with a dedicated palliative care team. Her work in the Annapolis Valley has included palliative medicine in the community, hospital and long-term care settings. She has also had many opportunities to teach in a range of settings such as conferences, rounds, workshops, retreats, and courses. She considers it a privilege to have been able to have been involved with about 3000 palliative patients and their families over a 15 year period in both Toronto and Nova Scotia.

Regrettably, Catherine has not been able to practice medicine for the last 3 years because of illness. She is still hoping that God will heal her body so that she may be able to return to work, but if not she prays that she will always be able to serve and live for Christ each day with love and joy as the Spirit empowers her. She continues to follow, with interest, the current Canadian discussions on Physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia. She hopes that with her palliative medicine background and her experience with her own illness, she may be able to be a voice for the value of life from conception to natural death.