

First comes love, then comes medicine

Shannon Linden | Posted: Friday, June 5, 2015 5:24 pm

They officially met in medical school, but Jacques de Jager will never forget setting eyes on the woman he will wed today, Jane Polley, in his third year of university.

“I was a friend of her brother, and I heard it through the grapevine he had a hot sister,” de Jager says, laughing. “Which turned out to be absolutely true.”

What’s not to love about his candor, but Polley has no recollection of that meeting. What she does remember was seeing the sensitive side of her future husband in a small study group.

“We had a touchy-feely group, the kind they make you do in med school, when you talk about your feelings more than medicine,” a smiling Polley said.

Hearing him muse about what mattered most had Polley falling for de Jager.

“He talked about his dad, an orthopedic surgeon, and the role he played in shaping Jacques’ decision to go into medicine.”

A committed physician, Dr. de Jager Sr. worked tirelessly to care for his patients, but he was always there for his family, too.

That message resonated with Polley, from a close-knit family of her own. She has an older sister and a younger brother. Her parents, Karen and David, will celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary this year.

“I always pictured building that life for myself,” Polley says.

De Jager tells a similar story. The eldest of three children, he also has a sister and a brother. His



The Good, the bad, and the bloody.

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parents, François and Matilde, have been married 30 years.

Their stethoscopes set on family practice — and family — de Jager, 26 in July, and Polley, 27, will burst from the blocks of their residency programs next year, and in a sea of employment uncertainty for many university grads, the world is their oyster.

Primary-care physicians are in such demand, the new docs (who plan to practice together) will have their choice of location. The mobility their specialty affords and the family life it supports, appeals to them both.

“I love getting to know my patients,” Polley says, “and I appreciate the ability to adjust my job to control my schedule.”

Passionate adventurers, the newlyweds’ plans include plenty of travel and, eventually, children of their own.

“I’m a bit of a traditionalist at heart,” de Jager admits. “I asked Jane’s dad permission to marry her, but I knew from the start, if I didn’t marry this girl, I’d regret it for the rest of my life.”

The couple plan to remain in Edmonton for a while, where they have spent the last 10 years completing their undergraduate work, medical school, and their residency programs through University of Alberta.

Ultimately, they’d like to settle in the place that makes their hearts sing loudest—the beautiful Okanagan.

They’ve chosen primary care because they see a need, value flexibility and lifestyle, but most of all, because they care.

With more than 200,000 British Columbians without a doctor, this province — indeed, this community — will welcome them with open arms.

Victoria-based Hollander Analytical Services recently reported health-care costs decrease when patients are followed by the same family practice. Anders Kelto, on Shots Health News from NPR, cited a study from the American Academy of Family Physicians that found family doctors who provide comprehensive care (rather than referring to specialists) save the health-care system some serious money. With 3,652 family docs and 555,165 Medicare patients across the U.S. involved, “Patients of physicians who provided a wider range of services experienced fewer hospitalizations and incurred lower health-care costs.”

With such patients being 35 per cent less likely to spend time in hospital, clearly what we cry out for are more family docs — enthusiastic, comprehensive and caring ones.

“Our education stresses whole body health as opposed to illness centered, or what’s wrong,” Polley explains.

“It’s protective in many aspects,” Je Jager adds.

With plans to teach or be a part of primary medical education with UBCO’s medical school, de Jager is eager to lay down roots, eventually anchoring a growing family in Kelowna. For Polley, a Kelowna Secondary grad, home is where the heart is. For their future patients, de Jager and Polley will be just the doctors we ordered.

Shannon Linden writes this health and humour column, a blog, magazine articles, and grocery lists. Talk to her at lindenshannon@mac.com.