

### Moving to a new office

*Peter Hutten-Czapowski,  
MD  
Scientific editor, CJRM  
Haileybury, Ont.*

*Correspondence to:  
Peter Hutten-Czapowski;  
phc@srpc.ca*

**T**he shiny new rural doctor recruit who comes to town, the older doctor who moves away to be closer to a family in the city, and the doctor who moves within town to a new building all share in the excitement of a move.

There will be new opportunities for sure. There may be a new group of colleagues or new relationships with an existing group. There will be the chance to bring best practices to the new space and to leave behind limitations of the old.

I moved to a municipal building early in my career. Some unnamed southern architect had designed it with single-pane windows and electric heat, neither of which was up to northern Ontario winters. One of my colleagues brought his dog to his office (we think to warm his feet) and had to thaw the dog dish, as it would freeze overnight. I doubt the fire chief would have approved of all the space heaters in use before central heating was installed.

A few years later, I moved my office to a private home. It was warmer and had the additional advantage of centripetal examining rooms, and I happily walked in circles for years. The design and the space were by no means perfect, however. I never did use the central dictating nook, and I did do a minor renovation to add space for a

nurse. Now I am moving back to the municipal building to join the rest of the “team” (but not before the town replaces the windows!). The team is the draw, but there are other buildings available.

Rural real estate pricing, such as it is outside the penumbra of commuting distance to the city, makes for all sorts of options. New can be done, and sometimes has to be done, but renovating an underused space is often the most cost-efficient choice. Then the rural doctor, generalist that he or she is, runs directly into a thousand questions that are at the limits of his or her abilities and potentially at the limits of anyone else in town. What is an efficient office design? Are the walls soundproof? (Staggered-stud construction is a good start... I think.) How can we ensure that our charts (be they paper or digital or both) remain accessible for the next 10–28 years (as statutes dictate)?

Sometimes (often) we ask an experienced colleague. The Internet is a fountain of free advice, usually good and sometimes rather terrible. There is always the consultant from the city, who just might need to be reminded about things such as snow loading in your part of the country. We muddle through. In that way it's perhaps not that different from our day job.