

### Dr. Robert M. Filler

Dr. Filler is a founding member of the Canadian Society of Telehealth and served as president from 2000 to 2002. He currently sits as a board member and plays an integral role in advocating for new public policy for telehealth.

Dr. Filler completed an unprecedented 18-year term as the surgeon-in-chief at the Hospital for Sick Children (HSC), during which time he also served as head of the Division of General Surgery for 20 years and chairman of the Medical Advisory Committee for six years.

He is an active member in more than a dozen prestigious Canadian and International Medical and Surgical Societies and has won numerous awards.

During his illustrious career, Dr. Filler mentored dozens of surgical residents. But the editors at *ElectronicHealthcare* were curious about who were the most important mentors in his career. Here is his response.

I had many mentors in my eight-year surgical residency but two stood out among them. Both were Surgeons-in-Chief and Professors of Surgery at the Harvard Medical School. Dr. Francis Moore was in charge of the surgical program at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital, and Dr. Robert Gross held the same position at Boston Children's Hospital.

Dr. Moore's mentoring role was far more influential in my surgical career than that of others who had a greater impact on my surgical technique skills. His teaching emphasized the "total care" of patients and hit a chord that was the very essence of my choice to become a physician. His famous book entitled *The Metabolic Response to Surgery*, served as the guide for the entire surgical world for total care of the surgical patient. In addition to performing the surgery we actively managed the complex medical problems such as heart disease, diabetes, liver disease, serious infections and whatever else coexisted in many of our patients. Medical problems did not fall between the cracks of multiple consultants. I learned to care not just for the specific organ or site of surgery but for everything else that mattered for the patient's well-being including important social and family issues. My patients have benefited enormously from the incorporation of this philosophy of care into my own professional life and activities. I have worked diligently to impart these same ideals to my own trainees, with confidence that they too will perpetuate the important concept of "total



**Dr. Robert Filler's passion for total patient care and innovation were evident during his years in surgery and are just as evident now as he advocates for telehealth.**

patient care" for all future generations.

Dr. Gross is considered to have been the most prominent paediatric surgeon of the 20th century. His 1953 textbook *The Surgery in Infancy in Childhood*, based on his own personal experience, contained the practical details of diagnosis, operative techniques, and postoperative care for a very large number of childhood conditions that required surgery. His book was the bible for all surgeons who needed to operate on a child. I learned how to treat a large variety of medical problems by methods that are still pertinent today. Perhaps even more important is that I came to appreciate Dr. Gross's inner strength, courage, innovation skills and never-ending desire to find a new or better way to treat a condition that was incurable or one with low percentage of success. Dr. Gross's values allowed me to rationalize my own desires to achieve the same goals, and provided a roadmap of how to accomplish such feats.

"Total patient care" and "innovation," the lessons that I learned from my two most important mentors, have had a great influence on the direction that my career has taken. The potential of Telehealth to provide "total care" for so many people motivated me to innovate and to implement a program that required the application of new methods and new technologies to solve long-standing problems in healthcare delivery.