When the UBC Faculty of Medicine decided in 2002 to distribute medical education by creating academically partnered four-year regional campuses, the idea was untested. Although regional campuses were common across North America, they delivered only part of the curriculum — either basic science education or clinical education, but not both. UBC was the first, along with the Université de Montréal, to take the leap into delivering nearly the entire medical school curriculum at regional campuses.

“Most people saw it as leap into the abyss, and figured we would fail,” says Joanna Bates, the Associate Dean, Education at the time. “We were told over and over again, ‘You can’t do that. What are you thinking?’”

Soon, however, the skepticism gave way to curiosity, and ultimately to emulation. Members of accreditation panels monitoring the Faculty’s progress spread the word. UBC became a frequent host to delegations from other medical schools — in Canada, the U.S., and Australia — who wanted to see first-hand how the Faculty of Medicine had managed to create equivalent educational experiences across such great distances.

Ten years after UBC opened the first four-year regional medical campuses, the idea has taken hold coast to coast and overseas.