



term protovirins (protein-like previral infectious particles) was suggested for these unusual infectious agents.

Two recent reports in *Nature*^{3,4} outlined conclusive evidence from research centres in the UK that the agent causing bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) is also responsible for variant CJD (vCJD). In the same issue of *Nature*, Jeffrey Almond and John Pattison commented on the possibility that the proteinaceous infectious agent in BSE and vCJD might have a cofactor.⁵ This cofactor may consist of a short chain of nucleotides attached to the infectious protein and may act as a signal primer for the agent on the host's DNA. I therefore suggest that "protovirin" would be a more appropriate name than "prion" for these unusual infectious agents, which cause transmissible spongiform encephalopathies.

Concern was voiced in Canada in 1990 about the strong possibility that BSE might spread to humans,⁶ and Agriculture Canada was urged at that time to slaughter all cattle that had been imported from the UK.⁷ To the credit of that ministry, the recommended action was taken in 1991, after an animal imported from the UK was found to have BSE. Since then, no further cases of BSE have been reported in Canada.

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Don't forget the male victims of abuse

The article "Responding to our abused patients" (*Can Med Assoc J* 1997;157[11]:1539-40), by Dr. Barbara Lent, was both thoughtful and thought provoking. In many articles and editorials concerning abuse, there is an implicit assumption that the victims are women and girls and that the perpetrators are men. How-

ever, boys are also victims of abuse, and they too carry their scars into adulthood.¹ In addition, women are also perpetrators of abuse.²

The concept of male victims and male survivors of abuse is difficult for many to grasp because the stereotype that categorizes men as strong and silent is alive and well. This myth only serves to perpetuate the difficulty men have in seeking the help they need.

Abuse is a very real issue, and there is little doubt that women carry the greatest burden. However, the ability to abuse and the chances of becoming a victim are not gender specific, and they cross all religious, social and economic boundaries. We have come a long way in recognizing female victims of abuse, but much remains to be done. For male victims of abuse, we are only beginning to recognize the problem.

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