



December 7, 2004

Auscultations

Tintin's perennially prepubescent appearance intrigued a team of investigators, and after reviewing the multiple traumas received by the reporter in the course of a long and adventurous career, they consider the effect of those traumas on the pathophysiology of his pituitary gland. Although they cannot confirm their conclusions, the investigators reveal that researching Tintin's health has had a beneficial effect on the counting and language abilities of the researchers themselves.

See page 1433



Michelle Greiver describes the travails of a new stethoscope (page 1445). Erica Weir and Richard St. Lawrence report on a significant spatial clustering of neurologic symptoms of elvisitis (page 1437). Ingrid Goh's referral request for Santa outlines various causes of concern for his health (page 1441). On a more serious note, Natalie Yanchar and colleagues present a case of "Christmas tree aspiration" in a child with recurrent pneumonia (page 1435).

Flashbacks

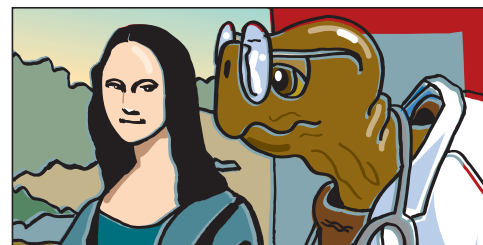
Christmas is full of surprises, and so is this section. An armed Santa takes a child hostage in a hospital cafeteria (page 1481). A house call in England in 1964 reveals the harsh reality of poverty and despair in which some patients live (page 1474). A psychiatrist, looking back at one psychiatric hospital in the 1960s, reflects that, although treatments change, issues that patients are concerned about remain the same (page 1477).

Over and above

Excess medications, excess expectations, excess weight ... the subject of excess reverberates throughout this section. Marcia Angell touches on different aspects of excess in the pharmaceutical industry and the industry's far-reaching influence (page 1451). Steven Lewis wonders whether



medicare is in fact too much of a good thing and whether the excessive expectations that we have of medicine and of our health care system can be fulfilled (page 1449). Joan Johnston discusses the excessive, and excessively narrow, focus on obesity in children over other eating disorders (page 1459). Farrah Mateen, the winner of this year's *CMAJ* essay prize, describes the excesses surrounding medical education (page 1466).



In other words

Although there are no fairytales in MEDLINE, there are Cinderellas. Lara Hazelton and Cathy Hickey describe the ways in which this symbol of neglect is used as a metaphor in medical literature (page 1495). Medical scientists often struggle with intimate relationships, and to help them out, D. J. Williams has translated the murky, qualitative language of love and courtship into a more familiar, quantitative jargon (page 1493). Wise physicians often sum up a case by quoting one of the giants of medicine. Gregory Kline questions these gnomish quotations and presents illuminating loopholes and exceptions (page 1491).

