



an excessive number of radiographs and inappropriate application of protective devices for inordinate periods. Why this situation continues unresolved strikes at the heart of the inadequacies in our current teaching programs across Canada concerning the spine and musculoskeletal system. We do not teach how to examine the cervical spine in suspected trauma; instead, we preach inappropriately that “all will be revealed” if only the correct diagnostic imaging test is ordered. As a result, when a physician has little, if any, confidence in his or her ability to examine the neck, he or she relies on someone else’s opinion or a diagnostic test. This explains the inordinate number of screening spine radiographs taken.

In a conscious, alert, cooperative patient whose attention has not been distracted by mood-altering drugs, al-

cohol or analgesics, physical examination of the neck is a far more sensitive way of screening for the presence of any cervical spine fracture than plain radiography.¹

I propose that, rather than developing extensive guidelines for ordering radiographs, we should develop a teaching program to instill the principles of physical examination of the neck. Only when physicians gain confidence in their ability to examine the neck is radiographic screening of the spine likely to diminish.

Richard D. Dewar, MD

University of Calgary Spine Program
Calgary, Alta.

Reference

1. Velmahos GC, Theodorou D, et al. Radiographic cervical spine evaluation in the alert asymptomatic blunt trauma victim: Much ado about nothing? *J Trauma* 1996;40:768.

Terfenadine and SSRIs

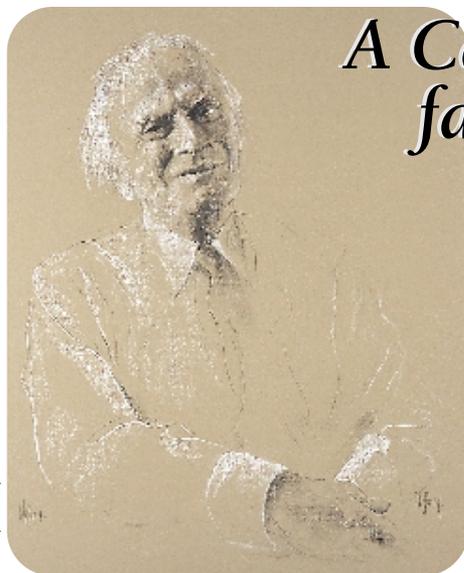
In the article “Terfenadine therapy: Can we justify the risks?” (*Can Med Assoc J* 1997;157:37-8), Dr. Robert Rangno correctly points out that certain drugs and foods that inhibit the enzyme CYP3A4 may, when combined with terfenadine, prolong the QT interval and predispose the patient to ventricular arrhythmias. He fails to include antidepressants, both tricyclics and selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs, especially fluvoxamine, nefazodone and fluoxetine), which all inhibit the CYP3A4 enzyme.

The increasingly popular SSRIs must be included in the list of drugs that should not be combined with terfenadine.

Gitta Tafler, BA, MD

Toronto, Ont.

Received via e-mail



Myfanwy Pavelić

A Canadian face on aging



“My mind goes back to November 1927 when I sat in the 4th row at Carnegie Hall and listened with tears to this eleven year old boy pour the music of Beethoven into my heart — He was eleven and so was I — and my mind was saying — just look — just listen and feel what he could do — and I could only sit and wonder what it would mean to be able to do something which could touch another’s heart — It was forty-five years later that Yehudi and I met for the first time and his warm understanding and fulfilling friendship has been a large part of my life for the past twenty-four years —”

Vancouver Island artist Myfanwy Pavelić wrote these words on the occasion of a 1997 gala benefit concert and landscape painting exhibition in Victoria that celebrated her lifelong friendship and artistic kinship with world-renowned violinist Yehudi Menuhin. Now in their 80s, both Myfanwy and Yehudi still actively share their extraordinary talents with the world. These portraits, which Myfanwy prepared for the exhibition program, were done with charcoal and white conté on beige paper.