



## Canada puts out the medicare red carpet for visiting VIPs

Some visitors needn't worry about buying medical insurance before their arrival in Canada. Health Canada will take care of that detail — but only if they're important. As the department's national VIP coordinator, Lyse Brunet's job is to ensure that

medical contingency plans are in place whenever heads of state, members of the Royal Family or the Pope land on Canadian soil.

"Under the Geneva Convention for diplomatic missions, the host country usually provides essential emergency health care for any visiting foreign dignitary," says Brunet, a nurse who works for Health Canada's Occupational and Envi-

ronmental Health Services Branch.

However, the medical services offered depend on how important the VIP is and on the security risks they face. Obviously, President Bill Clinton fits in the very important category. When he came to Ottawa in February 1995, Health Canada had an ambulance and the Ottawa Civic Hospital on constant standby. If he required emergency care, Brunet's

## New breed of drug detailers proving popular in BC

In a new twist on drug detailing, a different type of drug representative has been visiting physicians in North and West Vancouver. With no ties to any pharmaceutical manufacturer, they are bringing CME to the doctor's office in an attempt to help busy physicians select the best drugs for their patients (see *Can Med Assoc J* 1997;156:876-8).

"There are more than 2500 prescription drugs available and each year about 100 new drugs come on the market," said Dr. Terry Naumann, clinical pharmacist for the North Shore Community Drug Utilization Program, which operates out of North Vancouver's Lions Gate Hospital. "It can be pretty overwhelming. I help them sort fact and fiction."

Naumann, who holds a doctorate in pharmaceutical science, researches and writes a quarterly newsletter that outlines the effectiveness, safety and costs of various families of drugs. In the past 4 years topics have included antihypertensive and antibiotic medications,

nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, antidepressant drugs and inhaled and topical corticosteroid



Dr. Terry Naumann (right) visits Dr. Juanita Anderson

products. The newsletter is sent to the 100 family physicians and all specialists and pharmacists in the region, as well as to other interested readers. One physician who trained in BC has Naumann send the newsletter to her in Newfoundland.

Naumann follows up the mailing with a 15- to 30-minute visit to each doctor's office to discuss that quarter's topic. "As doctors we are inundated with so much advertising and so many drug reps that that is often all you see and hear," says West

Vancouver family physician Juanita Anderson. "But Terry talks about what is important — what works, what helps the patient and what is the best price."

Dr. Janice Blocka, also of West Vancouver, agrees: "It is good, basic stuff that is very applicable to our practices."

The program was the brainchild of Bob Nakagawa, director of Pharmacy at Lions Gate Hospital, who 4 years ago created the program, the first of its kind in Canada. The innovation won him an award

from the International Hospital Federation in 1994. Since then similar projects have been launched in Saskatoon and Nanaimo.

"Our credibility comes from the fact that what we are doing is completely unbiased," says Nakagawa. "The drug companies have nothing to worry about if they have a good product. But if what they are promoting is simply a 'me too' product that is twice as expensive but no more effective than some older drug, we let the doctors know." —  
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