

How we die

One part of *CMAJ* that I always read is the Deaths page.¹ I would like to suggest that, in the notice requesting submission of obituaries, you ask that the cause of death be included. So often I read of people I knew and wonder what killed them. Surely relatives would not object to sharing “from Hodgkin’s disease” or “from an aneurysm.”

It would also soften the blow of learning of a colleague’s passing (and remind us of the importance of signing donor cards) to read that the deceased’s organs were donated. If this information was provided regularly, perhaps we would have data for an interesting analysis in 10 years’ time.

Along with my will, I have already composed my own obituary, leaving 2 blank spaces for my executrix to enter the date and cause of my death. Yes, this piece is in the “colourful writing” style encouraged by *CMAJ*, but with all of my Dennis Miller-type rants I would need several hours to reduce it to your 200-word limit, and it would lose much of its flavour in the process. More likely, your readers will have to be referred to a full page in another publication. I’m sure some of them can hardly wait.

Ray Lewans
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Reference

1. Deaths. *CMAJ* 2003;168(7):943.

[The News Editor responds:]

We do include the cause of death if it is supplied in an obituary submitted by a reader. However, that information is often, even usually, withheld, and we always respect that decision.¹

Patrick Sullivan
News Editor
CMAJ

Reference

1. Deaths. *CMAJ* 2003;168(7):943.

Painful cover

The March 4, 2003, issue of *CMAJ* needlessly shows a young boy crying and frightened by a vaccination. Is there a purpose to portraying this? I think this shows disrespect to the patient (a child) and portrays no information of value.

N. Kevin Wade
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Requiem for a journal

Despite opinions to the contrary, the demise of the *Annals* of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, reported recently in *CMAJ*,¹ represents a significant loss to the Canadian medical literature. Although the *Annals* might have been perceived as having little importance to those in private practice for whom clinical specialty journals are more relevant, the journal did play an important role in Canadian academic medicine.

Like medical science, medical education and specialty training are constantly evolving. Today’s trainees are not the same as those of decades past, and their training programs have also changed. The only way that training programs and curricula will continue to improve is through evaluation, change and debate. By publishing original, peer-reviewed articles on medical education and related research, as well as articles on biomedical ethics and Canadian medical history, the *Annals* provided a unique forum for such debate. Journals of medical education exist in the United States and the United Kingdom, but they are not readily accessible to Canadian physicians. Moreover, only

rarely do Canadian articles appear in those journals.

Given the proliferation of both peer-reviewed and non-reviewed Canadian journals over the past decade, we might have expected that a journal published by an institution as respected as the Royal College could have found a way to survive.

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Reference

1. Sullivan P. Royal College *Annals* ceases publication. *CMAJ* 2003;168(3):325.

[The Royal College president responds:]

I share Eric Yoshida’s concern that the disappearance of the *Annals* of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, as described in a recent issue of *CMAJ*,¹ has created a void in the Canadian medical publication landscape. I also recognize the quality of the content that appeared in each issue of the *Annals* and value the contribution of all those involved in producing the journal.

However, for many years, the *Annals* has not enjoyed from the majority of Royal College fellows the level of support reflected in Yoshida’s comments. The current publishing environment dictated that the production and distribution costs of the *Annals* be significantly subsidized by fellows’ dues. Therefore, we needed to maximize the value of the publication to as large a number of fellows as possible. For these reasons, the College decided to suspend publication of the *Annals* in its existing form as of December 2002. The College is now exploring options for an alternative publication that will better serve the organization and its fellows. The new publication may well publish