

heed their doctor's advice as closely as possible on warning days. If it works, it could cut down on visits to the doctor and trips to the emergency room, freeing up overworked medical staff.

"It's an interesting idea and the concept is good," says Liu. "The only challenge is whether it is better than anything we already have."

Because MediClim does not track smog, it may not replace the importance of the smog alert system followed by patients with cardiovascular and respiratory conditions.

Gordon McBean, chair of policy at the Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction at the University of Western Ontario, says weather will increasingly play a role in patient management, especially as the climate continues to change. Warmer winters with increased snowfall could spell trouble for individuals with heart disease who decide to shovel their walks, and summer heat waves could make smog episodes more frequent. McBean, who has previously collaborated with Bourque and Bart, envisions an integrated natural hazards and warning system that would allow patients to plan their activities based on the weather. "People would learn how to self-adjust based on the levels. Some will know, for example, that a 4 is bad, where others will learn that 8 doesn't bother them at all." — Hannah Hoag, Montréal, Que.

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## Briefly

**Resident hours:** The United States Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education has approved an 18-month review ([www.acgme.org/acWebsite/home/nascaletter\\_feb2009.pdf](http://www.acgme.org/acWebsite/home/nascaletter_feb2009.pdf)) of resident duty hour standards in light of an Institute of Medicine committee recommendation that "duty hours should not exceed 16 hours per shift unless an uninterrupted 5-hour break for sleep is provided within shifts that last up to 30 hours." The Institute's Committee on Optimizing Graduate Medical Trainee (Resident) Hours and Work Schedules to Improve

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**Ease of traffic:** Calls are being made for a global health credentialing system that expedites physician migration. — Erin Driscoll, *CMAJ*

**Dementia:** The British government hopes to mitigate the effects of a forecast dementia crisis by opening memory clinics in every town and training general practitioners to spot early warning signs. — Mary Helen Spooner, London, England

**Hospital tracking:** Radio frequency identification readers are becoming all the rage in United States health care facilities. — Milan Korcok, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, USA



Siemens press picture

**Dispatch:** Amid the repetitive thumping of approaching helicopters, a Kingston, Ontario, physician admires the ingenuity of the Canadian-led multinational medical unit in Khandahar, Afghanistan. — Jorge Enrique Zamora, MD, Khandahar, Afghanistan



Dr. J.E. Zamora

**Sachets:** The manufacturer of an oral tobacco product now available in Sweden and Norway and parts of Canada claims it encourages harm reduction. — Erika Gilbert, Ottawa, Ont.

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Patient Safety also recommended that an external independent body be created to provide oversight and enforcement of resident duty hours ([www.iom.edu/Object.File/Master/60/469/residency%20hours%20revised%20for%20web.pdf](http://www.iom.edu/Object.File/Master/60/469/residency%20hours%20revised%20for%20web.pdf)).

**Mobility:** Doctors, nurses, pharmacists, paramedics and a host of other health professionals will obtain increased portability of their professional licences as of April 1 as a result of an amendment to the Agreement of Internal Trade reached by federal and provincial ministers of trade. The move will allow family doctors who are not certified by the College of Family Physicians of Canada and specialists not certified by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, but who hold unrestricted licences within a province, to move to another jurisdiction.

**FDA commissioner:** United States President Barack Obama has appointed

former New York City health commissioner Dr. Margaret "Peggy" Hamburg as the Food and Drug Administration's commissioner. Obama also indicated that his new administration will undertake a comprehensive review of FDA structure and operations. As well, he appointed a new Food Safety Working Group to advise him "on improving coordination throughout the government, examining and upgrading food safety laws, and enforcing laws that will keep the American people safe."

**Sport supplements:** The not-for-profit organization NSF International has launched an online initiative ([www.nsf-sport.com](http://www.nsf-sport.com)) aimed at providing athletes and coaches with a list of dietary supplements and sports nutrition products that can be safely used without violating international antidoping rules. — Wayne Kondro, *CMAJ*

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