



## Prostate cancer forum issues call for action

A Toronto oncologist says Canadian men have united on an issue that represents a looming crisis — prostate cancer. Dr. Neill Iscoe, who participated in the May release of recommendations from the National Prostate Cancer Forum, said the incidence of prostate cancer has been rising by 5.3% annually since 1985 and represents “a human and financial burden that we can no longer shoulder.”

The forum cited data that prostate cancer already costs Canadians more than \$250 million annually in lost productivity and immeasurable costs in suffering. It recommended that funding bodies earmark more money for prostate cancer research and ran-

domized control trials. Advocacy, communication and patient support are also recommended.

## More Ontario MDs wired

E-mail is becoming a popular way for physicians to keep in touch with their CMA divisions. *CMAJ* recently reported that about 20% of Alberta physicians were receiving electronic correspondence from the Alberta Medical Association. Now *Ontario Medical Review* reports that in the first 4 months of 1997 more than 1100 physicians signed on to the Ontario Medical Association's e-mail network, bringing to 3300 the number of physicians who receive the latest updates on negotiations, government relations, breaking news and current

events via electronic communication — at virtually no cost to the association. The number of physicians linked to the OMA fax and e-mail information network exceeds 11 300 — a healthy 56% of the 20 274 members.

## Travel health information available from Health Canada

How current is your travel health information? Health Canada has prepared documents to help health care professionals provide up-to-date pretravel advice to patients. Included is information on drug therapy and other topics of interest to family physicians and others concerned with the prevention of travel-related illness.

Prepared by the Committee to Advise on Tropical Medicine and Travel (CATMAT), the documents are available through:

- the FAXLINK service of the Laboratory Centre for Disease Control (LCDC), 613 941-3900;
- the LCDC's Internet site, [www.hwc.ca/hpb/lcdc](http://www.hwc.ca/hpb/lcdc); or
- mail order: for a reprint package of the CATMAT documents send \$9.95 (includes shipping and handling) to the Canadian Public Health Association Health Resources Centre, 400-1565 Carling Ave., Ottawa, ON K1Z 8R1; 613 725-3769; fax 613 725-9826.

## Cancer patients urged to inform MDs of pain

The Canadian Cancer Society (CCS) and Canadian Palliative Care Association have launched a poster campaign to encourage

cancer patients to talk to physicians about pain management. The 4-colour poster, suitable for waiting rooms, encourages patients not to mask pain but to communicate with physicians and nurses so that their pain can be effectively relieved and managed.

“The first step to pain relief is for the patient to tell others, especially health care professionals, how they feel,” Dr. Neil Hagen, chair of the CCS's National Medical Advisory Committee, stated in a news release. “We hope this new poster will prompt patients to start talking and will remind professionals to do their utmost to encourage patients to report pain.” Supported by a grant from Janssen-Ortho Inc., the campaign got under way during National Palliative Care Week in May. Details about the poster are available from any provincial division of the CCS.



## Fringe party preaches prevention

Although the Natural Law Party (NLP) received little voter attention during the recent federal election campaign, its prevention-based ap-



proach to health care probably appealed to some Canadians. During the campaign the NLP proposed a "comprehensive program of prevention-oriented health care and natural medicine." The party claimed that its plan to use transcendental meditation and live "in accordance with the laws of nature" would eliminate half of all disease in Canada within 3 years and thus save "billions of dollars" each year. Physicians who en-

dorsed the NLP health plan — several were quoted in campaign literature — said that preventive measures can dramatically reduce the incidence of many diseases. During the election race the NLP also promised to create a group of 10 000 "Yogic Flyers" to create "harmony and positivity in society" through meditation. The party's health care spokesperson is Dr. Ben Toane of Edmonton.

## Nursing specialties popular

By the end of 1997 more than 6000 registered nurses will have earned a certification credential in one of 8 specialty areas. The certification program is available in the fields of critical, perioperative, psychiatric and emergency care, nephrology, neuroscience, occupational health and oncology. A gerontological nursing specialty was added this year.

## Canadians don't practise sun safety but they know they should

Half of all Canadians do not adequately protect themselves from exposure to the sun even though they know they should be careful, a recent survey has determined. Researchers say the lack of safety precautions was both unexpected and troubling given that more than 80% of Canadians admitted they know when and how to protect themselves from sunburn.

"This survey points to the fact that skin cancer, which is already reaching epidemic proportions and costs millions of dollars a year to treat, will continue to increase unless more people take care when out in the sun," said Dr. Jason Rivers, national director of the Canadian Dermatology Association's (CDA) sun-awareness program and coprincipal investigator of the national study. The principal sponsors were the CDA, Environment Canada and the National Cancer Institute of Canada.

About 64 000 Canadians will get skin cancer this year, reflecting a doubling in the rate over the past 15 years. About 3000 will get melanoma, which like most skin cancers is preventable if reasonable precautions

are taken. So why aren't Canadians being more cautious?

Dr. Chris Lovato, associate professor at the University of British Columbia's Institute of Health Promotion Research and Rivers' coprincipal investigator, said 64% don't do it because they forget and 47% feel it is too inconvenient. Other reasons are wanting a tan (38%), lack of concern about sun damage (29%) and being unprepared (12%).

The survey of more than 4000 Canadians was released in June during National Sun Awareness

Week, the theme of which was outdoor workers' increased risk of skin cancer. Among the findings:

- 53% reported having 1 or more sunburns between June and August 1996;
- 48% of Canadians never or rarely use sunscreen;
- 48% are sunburned when participating in outdoor recreation activities.

Physicians should advise patients to avoid the sun between 11 am and 4 pm, seek shade, wear a hat and protective clothing, and use sunglasses and sunscreen.

At the University of Western Ontario, where the medical school curriculum has put new emphasis on community outreach, medical students are taking the safe-sun message to Grade 4 students to teach them the importance of developing a lifelong habit of protecting themselves from sun-related damage. This year students operated pilot projects at 3 local schools; it will be expanded to all elementary schools in London in 1998.

