



## Action needed on premature births, SOGC says

Canada's obstetricians want physicians to take a lead role in trying to reduce Canada's premature-birth rate. The Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada (SOGC) says the rate has remained unchanged for the last decade, accounting for roughly 26 000 births, or 6.5% of the total. The SOGC says 12% to 18% of premature babies experience developmental disabilities such as cerebral palsy, and the cost of treating them is about \$100 million a year.

Dr. Nan Schuurmans, the SOGC president, said physicians will have to help develop strategies to fight

premature births. These could include increased surveillance of high-risk women and greater awareness of the impact of tobacco, alcohol and drug use. Physicians also "need to be aware of the impact of poverty on all birth outcomes," Schuurmans said.

## Impressive growth for MD Management

MD Management, the CMA's wholly owned financial subsidiary, has been enjoying stellar growth in Canada's booming mutual fund market. In a July 25 article, the *Globe and Mail* reported that the company ranked fourth among 15 companies in terms of asset growth from May to June.

The company's mutual funds under management — the total does not include all the assets it manages — stood at \$6.711 billion at the end of June, up from \$6.462 billion in May. The impressive 1-month growth rate of 3.9% placed it well ahead of most other companies; 1 company experienced a decline of 1.7%. Total assets under management, including the MD Income Fund, surpassed \$9 billion this summer. The company reached the \$1-billion mark in 1985.

## Drug prices fall but overall spending rises

In 1996 manufacturers' prices for patented drug products declined for the third year in a row, but Health Canada estimates that total expenditures for drugs still increased faster than spending in other key sectors. Drugs now account for 14.4% of total health expenditures in Canada. The Patented Medicine Prices Review Board attributes the increased spending to factors such as increased use of prescription drugs and the impact of prescribing newer, more expensive drugs. Patented drugs now account for approximately 46% of all drug sales.

## Diabetes, protease-inhibitor link unproved: directorate

The Therapeutic Drugs Directorate at Health Canada says there is no conclusive evidence that protease inhibitors cause diabetes and hyperglycemia in HIV-infected patients but it recommends that physicians proceed cautiously until more information is available.

Although there have been reports that 8 Canadian patients, and 152 patients worldwide, have developed onset diabetes mellitus or exacerbated existing diabetes mellitus while receiving protease inhibitors, the directorate said "there is no conclusive evidence to establish a causal rela-

## Native student sets 2 marks at UBC

Dr. Nadine Caron achieved a double distinction this spring, becoming not only the top student in her class but also the first native woman to graduate from the University of British Columbia (UBC) medical school. Modestly, Caron calls her achievements "a tribute to the university," noting that there is another native female student a year behind her and "another behind her."

UBC Reports photo



Dr. Nadine Caron

travelled throughout the province with the Scientists in the Schools program, which encourages elementary students to further their education. Caron discussed pathology specimens with the students and ended her sessions with basketball lessons, since the sport was one of her high school passions. She also belongs to the Native Physicians Association in Canada.

Caron began her residency in general surgery July 1. Her choice was inspired by a summer of working with a surgeon in Tennessee as an undergraduate student in kinesiology. Relishing the challenge, she says that surgery "feels like the place I should be." — © Heather Kent

The 27-year-old daughter of an Ojibwa from Kamloops, BC, Caron worked with the British Columbia Medical Association's Committee on Aboriginal Health on a quota system for native medical students, which she hopes will be introduced shortly. She also