



Cardiac Surgery at the Ottawa Heart Institute, is considered one of Canada's leading authorities on sports and fitness. He was asked to design and eventually head the new centre which, at the time, was called the Canadian Centre for Drug-Free Sport. Two years ago, when federal funding for sports organizations was cut, the centre merged with another body dealing with ethical issues, the Fair Play Commission, to form the new centre.

Pipe says the organization is committed to ensuring that drugs and sports don't mix and that athletic competition takes place on a level playing field. However, protecting the rights of athletes against arbitrary disciplinary decisions is also part of its mandate, and that is where Rebagliati enters the picture.

Unlike Johnson, who knowingly used performance-enhancing steroids, the Olympic snowboarder claimed he was exposed to secondhand marijuana

smoke at a farewell part before he left for Nagano. Fortunately for Rebagliati, he got to keep his gold medal after it was revealed that no marijuana-testing agreement existed between the International Olympic Commission and the International Ski Federation, which governs snowboarders.

But that's no green light for the use of marijuana in sports, insists Pipe, who says he would have given Rebagliati a "severe reprimand" if he had the authority to do so. Although Pipe says the 3 am phone call he received from Canadian officials in Japan after Rebagliati's drug test left him feeling "a combination of dismay, disappointment and exasperation," the incident isn't the first in which he's been enlisted to settle an international dispute involving a Canadian athlete.

At the Pan Am Games 3 years ago, Pipe was recruited when rower Silken

Lauman was stripped of her gold medal after higher-than-acceptable traces of pseudoephedrine were found in her body. To treat a cold Lauman turned to an over-the-counter medication that was on the list of acceptable products, but she did not realize that the "decongestant" label that came with her version of the drug meant it was a banned substance. Her ignorance spared her any official sanction. — © Christopher Guly

Dr. Johnson weighs in

From time to time *CMAJ* will provide samples from one of the BMJ Publishing Group's latest offerings, *A Sceptic's Medical Dictionary*. As readers will learn from the following definition concerning image, there's isn't another book quite like it. It is available through the CMA's Membership Services Department, 888 855-2555.

"Someone labelled 'a psychologist'

MDs sceptical, but patients say bee venom relieves MS symptoms

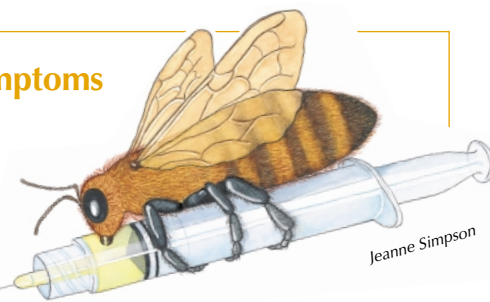
Every Saturday, 40 people make their way to Ron Lofthouse's beehives in Buckhorn, Ont. They're looking to get stung, not buy honey, but they're not participating in some bizarre S and M ritual. Instead, they maintain, honey bee venom (HBV) not only offers relief from the pain but also returns the mobility that has been lost over the years to a relentless foe, multiple sclerosis (MS).

Whitby, Ont., family physician Scott Henderson has been monitoring one of his patients, who has been diagnosed with MS and is a member of the group of 40. He has been treating the patient since 1992 and prescribing medication to treat the disease, but until recently he had been frustrated and was simply charting the progress of the disease

as it robbed his patient of more and more functions.

Henderson's patient decided on her own to try HBV; she was stung for the first time last April and since then Henderson has monitored results of the weekly stings she receives. He has noticed some improvement in both her physical condition and attitude, and says the amount of medication she is taking has been reduced. The woman says she has regained her energy. Last year, for the first time in years, she went raspberry picking.

However, despite such anecdotal evidence an expert in the MS field is sceptical and prescribes caution. Neurologist Paul O'Connor, director the MS clinic at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto, will neither prescribe nor recommend bee



Jeanne Simpson

venom to his patients. He said its benefits are unproven and there is a risk of allergic reaction to the stings, which increases with the number of times a person is stung.

Henderson agrees that caution is warranted, and says he cannot say for sure whether the improvement in his patient is due to natural remission, which is a characteristic of this form of the disease, or the HBV. Firmer evidence is expected later this year, when a study dealing with the impact of HBV on MS is expected to be published. — © Peter Wilton



appeared on my television screen to explain what he called the decline in medicine's 'professional image.' Our problem, it seems, is that we no longer 'radiate success.' For a moment I hoped — although in vain — he would suggest that we follow the advice of Dr. Samuel Johnson: 'A successful doctor needs 3 things. A top hat to give him authority; a paunch to give him dignity, and piles to give him an anxious expression.' "

England's 800-year-old hospital will live on

St. Bartholomew's, London's 800-year-old hospital, is to stay open after all. Following 6 years of campaigning, the oldest hospital in the city and the home base for one of the world's most famous medical schools is not closing. Instead, it is to become a specialist centre for oncology and cardiology; its accident and emergency department, the focus of much of the campaigning, will remain closed.

The announcement was made Feb. 4 by Frank Dobson, Britain's secretary of state for health. He accepted in full recommendations contained in a London strategy review, which he commissioned last June immediately after the new Labour government was elected.

Development of Bart's sister hospital, the Royal London — it used to be known simply as "the London" — is being reduced from the proposed 1200 beds to 900. The trust responsible for the hospitals had argued in favour of closing Bart's because of the savings that would be realized by operating from a single site. News of the reprieve earned a surprisingly muted response, and news reports surrounding the announcement were, for the most part, hidden away on newspapers' back pages.

Four other hospitals, including University College (UCH) and the Middlesex, are being replaced by a single 640-bed hospital. Sited next to

UCH, it will be complete by 2005. The hospitals already operate as a single trust and individual departments were combined several years ago.

Proposals for the Guy's and St. Thomas's Hospital Trust place casualty and medical and surgical services at the St. Thomas site, with nonemergency work being relegated to Guy's. — © *Caroline Richmond*

Canada's first female aboriginal psychiatrist honoured

Dr. Cornelia Wieman was 1 of 15 native men and women honoured with a National Aboriginal Achievement Award this month. Wieman, who graduated from McMaster University in 1993, has developed several psychiatric outreach programs, including a crisis intervention team at Ontario's Cape Croker First Nation and a geriatric program at Ontario's Wikwemikong First Nation. Wieman, 33, holds a bachelor of science in kinesiology and a master's degree in biomechanics from the University of Waterloo. She is currently completing a psychiatry fellowship at McMaster.

Past medicine-related recipients of the awards include kidney transplant

specialist Martin Gale McLoughlin, thoracic surgeon Noah Carpenter and Dalhousie University medical student Robert Johnson, Jr.

Sexual minorities report slams health system

A report by the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario claims that the province's health and social-service systems discriminate against the "sexual minorities" formed by lesbians, gay men and others. Project Affirmation, which was funded by Health Canada, studied survey results from 1233 respondents who described their experiences with the health and social-service systems. The final report says the results point to "systemic failure."

"There are stories ranging from unbelievable ignorance, insensitivity and hostility down to institutional stonewalling and incompetence. The system has failed this population by failing to provide appropriate service."

The report said discrimination takes 2 main forms. Systemic discrimination is characterized by service-intake forms that assume heterosexuality, training that routinely omits discussion of the needs of les-

Anniversary of Nobel Prize for insulin marked by Mint



Shortly after announcing that it would release its first coin featuring a Canadian physician, the Royal Canadian Mint has decided to honour 2 more doctors. To mark the 75th anniversary of the receipt of the Nobel Prize for Physiology and

Medicine by Drs. Frederick Banting and John Macleod, the Mint is releasing a \$100 gold coin that features a design by Robert Ralph Carmichael, who designed the loon that appears on Canada's \$1 coin. The new coin features figures inspired by those appearing on the Nobel Prize itself. The mint's first medicine-inspired coin honours Dr. Norman Bethune. That \$5 silver coin involves a joint project with a Chinese mint. Information is available from the Mint, 800 267-1871 (Canada) and 800 268-6468 (US).