



He said evidence-based child care has already moved into the electronic world because physicians have inexpensive and instantaneous access to the most current data required to make informed decisions. "There have been some very interesting and helpful developments in this area," explained Gerrard.

One example is the clinical integrator system (CLINT) developed by a Canadian physician, Dr. Rob Hayward, and now being used in South Carolina. With it, physicians making rounds use laptop computers to gain access to a medical database. "As they visit patients, the doctors have at their fingertips the most current medical information available," Gerrard said. "This tends to shift some of the traditional one-upmanship as to who has the latest knowledge to a more focused approach, since everyone is working with the same information."

He said the CLINT system can also be used to gain access to a more generalized database, such as the Cochrane Collaboration, a collection of evidence-based studies garnered from a huge variety of clinical trials conducted throughout the world. "There is a wealth of good, solid information in the Cochrane database that can be used by physicians, nurses practitioners and parents to provide informed child health care," he said.

And more and more it is parents, and not just physicians, who are seeking the best information about how to raise and care for children. "Parents are interested in what medical science has discovered in all areas of child health care. For example, I would like to see up-to-date, factual information on child psychology available to parent groups or professional groups in all parts of Manitoba."

Gerrard said the federal government's Community Access Program provides grants of up to \$30 000 to allow rural communities to upgrade computer facilities in

David Square photo



**Dr. Jon Gerrard: "shift the focus from treating sick kids to developing healthy children"**

## Give politics a try, Gerrard tells MDs

Although his stay in the House of Commons was brief — a single 4-year term — Dr. Jon Gerrard has no regrets about giving federal politics a try, and he wishes more doctors would do the same. "My experience of being in the Liberal cabinet suggests it is really important to have people with a background in health care and science at the top levels of decision-making. . . . I think some of the problems we are having in Manitoba reflect the fact that we haven't had people with a direct background in health care involved in political leadership."

And he says he isn't bitter about his close loss last June. "It was a privilege to have the opportunity to serve this country, and one of the many things I learned is that the electorate is always right. Losing is part of the process — one learns to accept the vicissitudes of politics, and that a single issue such as gun control can quickly swing the vote in favour of the opposition."

schools, libraries and other public buildings, and to promote Internet training for local residents, businesses and organizations. His vision is to create a user-friendly child-care database at the Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg that is accessible to professional health care providers and laypeople across the province. "I want people to have access to the Internet so they can email the Health Sciences Centre and receive answers to child health care questions based on fact, not anecdotal information."

As well, a new Web site would also provide in-depth information about all aspects of child health care, from psychology to parenting techniques. Gerrard said the system he envisions is slowly taking shape — last year about 25 rural communities in Manitoba received the federal grants that provide access to the Internet.

At the moment, one of Gerrard's favourite haunts is the Information Highway Café in St. Claude, Man., where locals gather to surf the 'Net. Gerrard isn't surprised that many of them seek information on a variety of health care topics.

"Evidence-based medicine is the wave of the future in child health care and we all need access to the latest technology to make optimum use of this exciting new approach to the delivery of medical science." ?