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AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

One of the great pleasures of being an editor is opening the mail. Unlike our personal mail — which is usually a series of expected missives about financial responsibilities — editorial mail is full of surprises. Each manuscript begins its journey toward our pages at this daily ritual. The papers are placed in stacks, read, classified and sent for peer review. For most manuscripts this process is easily accomplished, but every so often we get one that is distinctly different, passing strange, outré. These are set aside because we don't know what to do with them: very few of our peer reviewers are classified under the key word "bizarre." This year the pile got a bit larger than usual, so we elected to see if we could get enough of these manuscripts together to create a special issue of *CMAJ*. To fill out the issue, we published a call for papers, and more once-elusive science arrived.

The first paper to be accepted was one by Drs. Robert Patterson and Charles Weijer (page 1480). We had not been aware of the seminal work being done in Springfield by Drs. Julius Hibbert and Nick Riviera, nor of their prize patient, a middle-aged, overweight male named Homer J. Simpson. News Editor Pat Sullivan assured us that this was simply because we spent too much time on MEDLINE and not enough time in front of the TV. In an accompanying editorial Dr. Michael Yeo (page 1476) comments on ethical issues related to the medical care provided to Mr. Simpson. We believe that many of our readers will support Yeo's contention that the real role model for today's physicians is not found in *The Simpsons* but in the original *Star Trek*, in the person of one Bones McCoy.

The next research article to make the grade was by Drs. W.E. Osmun

and C. Naugler (page 1457), who have done some very original work on hissy fits. Their paper came complete with a chart that looks like the Manhattan skyline and a rather outrageous demand for a free ad for their new chain of fast food / angioplasty clinics. When you read the article you will understand why it passed peer review so quickly.

By the time Dr. Jaime Smith (page 1485) had uncovered and forwarded a psychiatric consultation involving a patient named Sam McGee — no confidentiality rules have been breached because McGee's story has already been told in a previous publication — we knew our special issue was destined to be, well, special.

This is also the first issue of *CMAJ* to contain an article by a specialist in medieval literature (page 1482). Dr. Ruth Harvey, in her analysis of urinalysis in the Middle Ages, has brought a new meaning to the phrase "I'll drink to that."

Meanwhile, Dr. Kishore Visvanathan (page 1487) has taken the time to describe some groundbreaking work under way in Saskatchewan, and his Saskatoon Clamp™ provides much food for thought. Perhaps too much.

We have also delved into complementary medicine. One of our regular contributors, David Square, grew a herb garden for us over the summer and discovered a plant that cures both flatulence and reduced sex drive (page 1495). He surmises that there may be a connection.

These are only a few of the treasures that await you within the pages that follow. We must mention one more treasure — the special look that Hugh Malcolm has given to this issue. His superb art direction is the wrapping for our Holiday Review. We hope you enjoy it.

And oh yes, happy holidays. ?