



vately funded, medically required services as a complement to an adequately funded public system.

Amnesty International recognizes CMA action

Amnesty International's Medical Network has called attention to 2 CMA actions opposing human-rights abuses. A recent edition of the network's *Health Care and Human Rights* noted that the CMA's new Code of Ethics, adopted by General Council in 1996, includes an item (33) that condemns human-rights abuses. It also noted that General Council passed a resolution protesting the Nigerian government's decision to cancel the annual meeting of the Nigerian Medical Association and the subsequent sentencing of the association president to 15 years in jail. The Medical Network welcomes the financial, moral and letter-writing support of Canadian physicians. Information is available from 214 Montreal Road, Vanier ON K1L 1A4.

Marijuana ingredient used legally in pharmaceutical product

The controversy over referenda in California and Arizona that called for the legalization of marijuana for medical purposes prompted Unimed Pharmaceuticals to issue a news release stating that a pure synthetic form of marijuana's active ingredient, THC, is legally available in a prescription drug. Dronabinol is used to treat nausea and vomiting associated with certain cancer chemotherapies.

FPs not being abandoned for alternate types of therapy

More patients may be investigating alternative-medicine therapies, but more than 85% of them continue to consult their family physician, a 2-year study at the University of Toronto has concluded. When researchers from the U of T developed a profile of how 300 people used different types of health care, they found that 93% of chiropractic pa-

tients, 88% of acupuncture patients, 95% of naturopathy patients and 87% of Reiki clients also sought health care from a family physician. (Reiki concentrates primarily on emotional healing.) "Physicians have worried that their patients will abandon them for alternative medicine, but this is not the case," the U of T stated in a news release.

Video shows how college's disciplinary actions pursued

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario is selling an 18-minute video that describes its disciplinary process. The college notes that a disciplinary hearing can be an intimidating experience for physicians and complainants and says its video demystifies the process and provides insight into the roles of the prosecution and defence lawyers. It features the testimony of witnesses, the physician and the complainant. In the sample case, a physician was charged with professional misconduct following the death of a patient. The video costs \$10; information is available from the college by fax, 416 961-8035.

Lights out, music on



Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast — and to increase the satisfaction of elderly outpatients undergoing cataract surgery, the *Canadian Journal of Anaesthesiology* reports (1997;44:43-48). Researchers from the Western Division of the Toronto Hospital evaluated music's effect on 121 elderly outpatients undergoing elective cataract surgery with retrobulbar block and monitored anesthetic care using fentanyl or alfentanil and midazolam.

Patients heard either relaxing suggestions, white noise, operating-room noise or relaxing music. Vital signs were documented, anxiety was

assessed using the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory and visual analog scales were used to assess anxiety and patient satisfaction. The study showed that music and relaxing suggestions consistently improved patient satisfaction, and elderly patients were more satisfied with their experience if they heard music. "In an era where patient satisfaction seems to be a paramount goal," the researchers concluded, "it would appear that music plays a role in enhancing this satisfaction and is a useful tool in outpatients undergoing peripheral procedures with monitored anesthetic care."

Taking the mystery out of Nova Scotia's tar ponds

Three levels of government have committed \$1.7 million to support community-based environmental initiatives to study ways to clean up the tar ponds in Sydney, NS. Nearly a century of discharge from steel-making operations in Cape Breton's industrial heartland had turned a tidal inlet into toxic-waste site that was considered an environmental cleanup problem second only to the Love Canal near Niagara Falls, NY (Robb N. Were jobs more important than health in Sydney? *Can Med Assoc J* 1995;152:919-923).

Although a cleanup is still years away, the federal, provincial and municipal governments have agreed to