



my most grateful patients. The quotation of Hunter's discussion of the interpretive function of the physician brought to mind a patient whose medical complaint had a nonmedical explanation. A woman in her early 60s presented with the following story:

Patient: "Doctor, I am afraid that I'm going crazy."

Doctor: "Why do you think that?"

Patient: "My car keeps jumping sideways when I am driving down a perfectly straight road."

Doctor: "You're not crazy, you're just driving a Dodge Aspen."

Patient: "How on earth did you know that?"

Doctor: "My wife has one, and it does the same thing."

Patient: "Oh, thank you so much, doctor; that's such a relief!"

At the time I recalled one of Dr. Ian McWhinney's teachings, that one of the requirements of a good physician is to have experience of life. We don't learn it all in medical school. We keep learning all the time.

David Spence, MD
London, Ont.

Reference

1. Todkill AM, Hoey J. Entering "The Left Atrium." *CMAJ* 1999;160(1):67-8.

Respect matters

The main point that I take from Robert Patterson's article,¹ as well as from my own experiences during a just-completed residency and fellowship, is that respect matters.

During training, all of the stress, long hours and difficult decisions can be transformed into 2 quite different things. If there is disregard and disrespect for the trainee, the bad becomes unbearable. This became obvious to me whenever a physician or nurse made sure that the "junior doctor" was belittled and put in his place. After all, one day this physician too would be like the others: uncaring, cold and self-hating. Such moments were very real, and very trying.

On the other hand, when I received

respect and support from others, the worst situations could be dealt with through reflection, and this fostered collegiality. The really bad days were made tolerable, while egos and personal integrity were preserved at no extra cost.

I have now completed my training, and I consider myself neither uncaring, cold nor self-deprecating. I care for the patients and people I work with; there is no other option.

Joel Ray, MD
Hamilton, Ont.

Reference

1. Patterson R. "You're the worst goddam resident I've ever had." *CMAJ* 1998;159(7):823-5.

The Internet and chiropractic

Further to Terry Johnson's article on chiropractic,¹ your readers might be interested to know that I have established a special Web site known as ChiroWatch (www.chirowatch.com). It covers chiropractic practice in Canada, including the battle at York University that Johnson refers to, the tragic death of a young woman in Regina and other issues involving chiropractors in Canada.

The Internet is a powerful weapon in the battle against quackery. We should use it, especially when our government watchdogs allow it to thrive in our own communities. The CMA must take a stand to protect our children from harm. To do less would be wrong.

Terry Polevoy, MD
Waterloo, Ont.

Reference

1. Johnson T. Angry scientists fight university's attempt to affiliate with chiropractic college. *CMAJ* 1999;160(1):99-100.

A week to remember

Thank you for a most heart-felt article, "A week in November."¹ Life is a mixed bag of joy and despair, happiness and sorrow. I too used to

take my son on house calls. What a delightful sight to watch the face of an elderly shut-in brighten up! Invariably, with a smile, my son was offered a plate of cookies and a glass of milk and kept busy while I conducted my medical visit. It never ceased to amaze me what a great therapeutic value his presence offered — like a gentle spring breeze. And his housecall fee was minimal.

Thank you also for your outrageously barmy Holiday Review issue.

Yasuo Ishida, MD
St. Louis, Mo.

Reference

1. Despard C. A week in November. *CMAJ* 1998; 159(10):1283-4.

That holiday issue of yours

I wanted to say how much I appreciated the humour in your Holiday Review 1998. I think that this is exactly what is needed at Christmas. The only other appropriate time for this type of review, I suppose, would be Jan. 25. I refer, of course, to the last verse of Robert Burns's "To a Louse."

W. Watson Buchanan, MD
Hamilton, Ont.

I rather enjoyed the *BMJ* holiday issue but I think yours was in poor taste, especially your mention of a study that allows women to judge the length of men's privates by studying their foot size. Leave that kind of humour to *Penthouse*. They're better at it.

J. Paul Schaefer, MD
Summerside, PEI

Heartiest congratulations for this wonderful relief from the straight and narrow of medical and scientific journalism. It was a great read, and I hope most physicians took some time with it to help lift them out of the desperate seriousness of the victim roles so many are playing these days. Well done.

Charles J. Wright, MD
Vancouver, BC