



when piety does not seem to be working anymore.

D.M. Goodwin, MD
Niagara Falls, Ont.

Reference

1. Canadian Medical Association. Charter for Physicians [policy]. *CMAJ* 1999;161(4):430-1.
2. Kenny N, Weijer C, Baylis F. Voting ourselves rights: a critique of the Canadian Medical Association Charter for Physicians. *CMAJ* 1999;161(4):399-400.

The essence of the social role unconsciously (and, recently, ambivalently) given to physicians is crucial in sustaining the denial that is so basic to Western civilization — denial, that is, of death and of the suffering and chaos that are a normal part of life. It is fine for a parent to serve, transitionally, as a powerful and perfect object and, likewise, for physicians to be sensitive to the psychological regression that is a normal part of illness. However, there is nothing healthy for either patients or physicians in holding on to the illusion that the physician always carries boundless resources, certainty and strength. In any other relationship this would be viewed as dysfunctional.

André Piver, MD
Nelson, BC

One of the compelling reasons for a Charter for Physicians, as articulated by Dan MacCarthy,¹ is that physicians, and for that matter patients, need protection from intrusive government policies that ignore advice from physicians and others in the underfunded health care system. I am affronted that Nuala Kenny and her colleagues describe the charter as “morally indefensible”² while failing to acknowledge a very serious conflict of interest: Kenny

does not acknowledge being Deputy Minister of Health of Nova Scotia.

References

1. MacCarthy D. Why physicians need a charter. *CMAJ* 1999;161(4):400-1.
2. Kenny N, Weijer C, Baylis F. Voting ourselves rights: a critique of the Canadian Medical Association Charter for Physicians. *CMAJ* 1999;161(4):399-400.

[The editor-in-chief responds:]

When Nuala Kenny wrote the article with her colleagues she was a Professor of Pediatrics and Director of the Office of Bioethics Education and Research at Dalhousie University, Halifax. When the article in question was in press, Kenny accepted a temporary appointment as Acting Deputy Minister of

Health in Nova Scotia. This was a short-term secondment from the university. She has now returned full-time to her academic positions.

John Hoey, MD

Correction

In Table 1 of a recent article by Colleen J. Maxwell and colleagues,¹ the drug group name for the second row of data was missing: it should be β -blocker.

Reference

1. Maxwell CJ, Hogan DB, Ebly EM. Calcium-channel blockers and cognitive function in elderly people: results from the Canadian Study of Health and Aging. *CMAJ* 1999;161(5):501-6.

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