

Are faculty members facing more harassment?

Faculty members at some medical schools report that they face harassment and intimidation from their students, colleagues and administrators. “We need to look at intimidation of faculty by residents,” Dr. William Wrixon, associate dean of postgraduate medical education at Dalhousie told physicians attending a plenary session during the Fifth Annual Conference on Residency Education in Montreal last fall.

Most complaints received at the University of British Columbia’s Equity Office used to come from students, but for the last 2 years the majority have come from male faculty members. “The pendulum has shifted,” said Dr. Peggy Ross, associate dean of equity at UBC.

Some faculty complain of personal harassment when they don’t receive the same resources as colleagues. “Sometimes more junior people get the resources and there’s no rhyme nor reason to it,” said Ross. Her solution is to have departments draw up resource guidelines.

Ross says most faculty harassment involves other faculty members and administrators, but Wrixon thinks there

has been an increase in harassment of faculty members by residents. One of the more common ploys is to threaten to call the Royal College if faculty don’t fix some aspect of a training program the resident doesn’t like, such as the evaluation protocol.

In one case a faculty member was ill and could not complete this mid-rotation evaluation. When the faculty member refused to pass the resident, he protested because the evaluation had not been done. The faculty member stood by his decision but many don’t, says Wrixon. “A lot will say, ‘let’s see if the next rotation fails him.’ ” This is partially because the appeal process can take several years and countless meetings.

Dr. Chris de Gara, division director for general surgery at the University of Alberta, told of one student who had threatened to take action each time he disagreed with an evaluation, and repeatedly used every appeal process. During a workshop on intimidation in surgical training, de Gara told of a staff member who tried to commit suicide after a graduate student threatened his career.

Wrixon said there is little research into intimidation of teachers by students.

“We shouldn’t focus only on the interests of the residents. It has got to work both ways because we’re all capable of misbehaving.” — *Barbara Sibbald, CMAJ*

Newfoundland boosts re-entry positions

Some good news finally seems to be emerging for practising physicians who wish to train in a new specialty. Newfoundland is funding 13 entry-level residency positions that begin July 1, up from the 5 positions it sponsored last year. “This is an avenue of approach that didn’t exist before,” Melody Marshall of the Department of Postgraduate Medical Studies at Memorial University said of the expanded number of re-entry positions. She said Newfoundland has been offering the positions for about 5 years, but this is the largest number available so far.

These positions have all but disappeared in Canada since the residency system was reorganized 7 years ago. Today there are only enough training slots for new graduates of Canadian medical schools. Slots that remain unfilled tend to be in unpopular specialties such as laboratory medicine.

The openings in Newfoundland, which will be spread across different specialties, contain no return-of-service provision, but Marshall said priority will be given to in-province applicants. “Emphasis will be placed on length of service to the province, with value placed on the remoteness of the area served.” Information on the program is available from Postgraduate Medical Studies at Memorial University, 709 737-6680. The application deadline is Mar. 31, 2000. — *Patrick Sullivan, CMAJ*



Dracula wants your blood. Now!

Canada’s new national blood agency might wish to examine a blood donor campaign launched in Berlin last year: it featured a blue blood said to be Count Dracula’s last surviving descendant.

The count, whose full name is Ottomar Rudolphe Vlad Dracul Prince Kretzulesco, lives in a crumbling castle on the southern outskirts of the German capital. He agreed to help the Red Cross after Germany’s health minister appealed for more donors in an attempt

to replenish dwindling national stocks.

Noting that supplies were so low that all nonurgent operations had been put on hold, the minister appealed to all Germans between 18 and 68 to donate blood or plasma. The Count helped the campaign by attending special showings of vampire movies for blood donors. All those who gave blood received his autograph.

The Count is the last descendant of the bloodthirsty Romanian prince named Vlad the Impaler, who some consider the inspiration for Irish novelist Bram Stoker’s 1897 gothic horror fantasy, *Dracula*. — *Gil Kezwer, Toronto*