

Anne Draginda, graduated from the University of Alberta at age 48. At the time, she was a mother of four and grandmother of two. I don't know whether she was Canada's oldest medical graduate, but she may hold the unique distinction of being the only grandmother to graduate from medical school.

J.B. Hunter

Edmonton, Alta.

Reference

1. Sullivan P. We protest! [letter]. *CMAJ* 2000; 162(12):1664.

Not fade away

At my age — I retired 8 years ago — I find the Deaths section of *CMAJ* interesting and informative. In your May 2 issue,¹ I noted the passing of Douglas Harvie, who followed my dad in his practice in Chapleau, Ont., in 1927. I also noted the names of John Simpson, an old student friend,

and Woodie Woodsworth, whom I valued as a teacher of anesthesia. Woodie's father founded the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, the forerunner of the New Democratic Party.

I am writing to congratulate *CMAJ* for inviting readers to submit brief death notices, but in particular to comment on the death of Donald Williams, also announced in your May 2 issue. He was an outstanding teacher and practitioner of dermatology, and I believe he headed the Canadian army's venereal disease program during World War II. The story of how he became interested in dermatology is in itself a great one. As is the case with many of your death notices, more needs to be told about him.

It is unfortunate that few readers have responded to your request to supply more information. As others have discovered, physicians are an endless source of fascinating detail within the web of Canadian history, and their contributions are not limited to the confines of medicine.

Perhaps we should have a permanent file to remember physicians upon their death. Too many of them fade away quietly.

William M. Brummitt

Anesthesiologist (ret'd)

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Reference

1. Deaths. *CMAJ* 2000;162(9):1387.

St. John's wort and schizophrenia

In recent years St. John's wort has become a popular natural medicine for the treatment of depression¹ and general symptoms such as tiredness and lack of energy. Unfortunately, the potential harmful effects of St. John's wort have not been fully recognized. It inhibits monoamine oxidase² and the reuptake of serotonin and norepinephrine.^{3,4} Such mechanisms of action underlie the therapeutic effects of antidepressants. Like antidepressants, St.