

On the Net

Letting your fingers do the walking to a new job

Unhappy with your current position? Looking for a career change? Your move to a new job may be only a mouse click away.

For physicians, some of the most interesting developments in online job searching are taking place at the CMA's own site, where classified advertising from *CMAJ* has proved a popular addition since its introduction 6 months ago (www.cma.ca/careers/index.htm). Advertisements are listed under 10 different headings, which are then subdivided — the Positions Vacant section offers 14 subclassifications for individual specialties. The classified ads from the Sept. 19 issue of *CMAJ* contained 38 vacant positions for family physicians; visitors can respond to many of them with a mouse click.

Another major change will take place early next year, when CMA Careers (www.cmacareers.com) is launched as part of Industry Canada's massive SkillNet site (www.skillnet.ca). Karen

McKenzie, program manager for CMA Careers, says the new site will provide a career-matching service that will allow physicians and other health care professionals to post their resumé online. This will allow them to match their



qualifications to a range of medical opportunities across Canada. As well, employers will be able to post vacant positions and manage large recruitment campaigns. "The idea is to bring both sides of the career-matching equation together in one place," she said. (CMA

members will be able to register and search the site for free; there will be a charge for nonmembers.)

SkillNet has already attracted similar participation from the nursing, teaching and other professions. McKenzie said the CMA is particularly eager to attract health care professionals to the site as they launch their careers.

If you're interested in a job in biomedical research, consider visiting www.sciencejobs.com. Developed by the publishers of *New Scientist* (www.newscientist.com) and the research Web site *Biomednet* (www.bmn.com), this new service is an electronic career board that lets employers post job openings.

Although the focus is American, there are postings from Canada, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. There is also a service that lets scientists receive email notifications of postings in their area of interest. — *Michael O'Reilly, mike@oreilly.net*

BC doctor seeks class-action suit over payment for uninsured patients

An emergency physician who used to practise in British Columbia is suing the provincial government for nonpayment of services he provided to uninsured patients. Dr. James Halvorson has also applied to have his case certified as a class-action suit, which has the potential to involve many more of the province's doctors. A decision is expected soon.

Halvorson's lawyer, Sandy Kovacs, says the lawsuit requests that the case date to 1984, when the Canada Health Act was enacted. Kovacs estimates BC physicians have lost \$140 million since then because they weren't paid for providing care to uninsured patients. Before 1996, medical insurance for BC residents was cancelled if premiums were in arrears for more than 3 months; physicians lost about \$10 million a year because of nonpaid treatment provided

to these deinsured patients. After 1996, changes were made to cover people for up to a year after they fell into arrears. Kovacs estimates that about \$5 million a year is owing to physicians for uninsured services provided since then. BC and Alberta are the only provinces charging medical insurance premiums. In BC, premiums cost \$64 monthly for families with 2 children.

About 40 000 of BC's 4 million residents are currently unregistered. Nonpayment of premiums doesn't limit a person's health coverage "in any way," says Jeff Gaulin, a government spokesperson. The government tries to trace unregistered people; if there is no contact for a year, they are assumed to have left the province.

Emergency physicians are affected most. At St. Paul's Hospital in down-

town Vancouver, which serves many homeless people who have no insurance, emergency doctors opted for a service contract 10 years ago to cover uninsured patients' billings.

Dr. Jane Goundrey, head anesthetist at the Peace Arch Hospital in White Rock, says the problem of uncompensated, on-call work is "infrequent but annoying." These patients often arrive with nonemergency complaints during evenings or weekends, she said. Recently, surgery was delayed for a patient with a fractured ankle after doctors discovered that his medical insurance had lapsed. Goundrey defends the action: "There was at least a 3-day period in which the surgery could be performed safely, so there was plenty of time for the patient to apply for benefits." — *Heather Kent, Vancouver*