

Correspondance

Maternity leave for adoptive parents in Ontario

I am writing in response to the recent letter by Kristen Hallett, who expressed concern that the Ontario Medical Association Maternity Leave Benefit Program does not extend to adoptive mothers.¹ The OMA shares the perspective that paternity and adoption benefits should be provided in addition to maternity benefits.

During our most recent negotiations with government, the OMA proposed more broadly based family benefits. However, after significant deliberation, it was determined that the OMA and government would first initiate a maternity benefit to recognize the most pressing need in the face of long-standing and well-documented evidence of the biological issues for new mothers. The OMA intends to further explore the issue of family benefits in our next round of negotiations, with the goal of expanding the benefit program to include paternity and adoption coverage.

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Reference

1. Hallett K. MDs, maternity leave and adopted children [letter]. *CMAJ* 2001;164(1):15-6.

Regarding Pooh

In every joke is a grain of truth. I assume the point of the article by Sarah Shea and colleagues is that people we think are quirky could actually use some psychoactive medication to make them normal.¹ Using the quirky characters of the Hundred Acre Wood is a clever way of making the point.

However, I find it sad that we feel the need to medicate everyone into sameness. The characters in A.A. Milne's stories comprise a community of unique individuals who function

quite well in their society. Who is to say that they need to be changed, if they themselves do not? Methylphenidate for Pooh, paroxetine for Piglet, clonidine for Tigger, fluoxetine for Eeyore? And the behaviour changes suggested consist mostly of separating these individuals from their support systems — getting Roo away from Tigger and Christopher Robin away from his Freudian Pooh.

Our increasing use of mood-controlling drugs, although clearly beneficial for some people, threatens to turn us into a society that doesn't tolerate difference. Overmedicating is a problem that clinical psychologists must heed when contemplating treatment for patients. An article such as this that suggests (however cutely) that we should be looking to medicate individuals who did not seek treatment (and for the most part who did not express any dissatisfaction with their lives) pushes this problem in the wrong direction.

Finally, predicting that Kanga will end up struggling to look after multiple children "conceived in casual relationships with different fathers, stuck at a dead end with inadequate financial resources" is stereotyping, not diagnosing. Attitudes like this contribute to the lack of support and choices for single mothers and can become self-fulfilling prophecies when offered by health care professionals.

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Reference

1. Shea SE, Gordon K, Hawkins A, Kawchuk J, Smith D. Pathology in the Hundred Acre Wood: a neurodevelopmental perspective on A.A. Milne. *CMAJ* 2000;163(12):1557-9.

I believe that Sarah Shea and colleagues mistook a bat for a belfry and misdiagnosed Pooh completely, but then they're psychiatrists.¹ Pooh is a classic example of a patient with

hypothyroidism. He's pudgy and always craving carbs, and then there's his brain fog, mental confusion, slurring or juxtaposed speech patterns, hesitancy at speaking, spaced-out look and obvious dyslexic problems, along with attention deficit disorder, slow and plodding gait, tummy aches, insulin resistance with upper body weight gain and a need for lots of naps — I'm pretty sure Pooh's hibernation period lasts longer than those of the average bear.

Of course, congenital hypothyroidism would lead to simplistic communication skills and mental and physical retardation if the disease were undiagnosed and untreated. The symptoms of acquired hypothyroidism come on more gradually as the body runs out of thyroid hormones. I wonder if his coat sheds easily and if he's got lots of aches and pains. Poor, poor Pooh.

Tigger, on the other hand, is a perfect example of hyperthyroidism. His excessive energy is translated into rapid speech, jerky movements, high-flying stunts and acting before thinking. His throat has an enlarged profile and his eyes are always bugging out. I imagine he sweats a lot and has diarrhea. Many disorders like panic attacks and compulsive disorders are seen even in sub-clinical hyperthyroidism. Someone give Tigger a β -blocker.

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Reference

1. Shea SE, Gordon K, Hawkins A, Kawchuk J, Smith D. Pathology in the Hundred Acre Wood: a neurodevelopmental perspective on A.A. Milne. *CMAJ* 2000;163(12):1557-9.

Your authors are free to diagnose the psychosocial problems of Christopher Robin,¹ but diagnosis of the other inhabitants of the Hundred Acre Wood requires a licence to practise veterinary medicine. Diagnosis and treatment of both physical and behavioural problems in animals, including animals used as aids for humans,^{2,3} require appropriate training to under-