

## New editorial fellow has journalistic roots

Perhaps Stephen Choi's path to *CMAJ*'s editorial fellowship was preordained.

His grandfather, Jong-In Hong, was a nationally renowned journalist in Korea who received birthday presents from the country's president, while his father's passion for literature led him to give his only son the middle name Bernard — in homage to George Bernard Shaw.

Choi, who completed his residency in emergency medicine at Queen's University earlier this year, has opted to spend his first year at *CMAJ* instead of in an emergency department, in part because he felt it would help fulfil his latent literary leanings.

"I've always had an interest in writing because I'm a big reader, and the two go hand in hand. Science writing can also include a nice turn of phrase, and I like the idea of translating medical knowledge into something that's more understandable.

"I'm also interested in the goings-on at a medical journal. How do you manage to publish every couple of weeks? What do you publish? What should you publish?"

The position of editorial fellow has existed for 6 years. The fellow, who acts as an associate scientific editor, spends a year reviewing submissions, corresponding with authors and working closely with the senior editorial team to develop clinical and editorial content.

Previous fellows have had a significant impact on the journal. Two are now part-time associate editors: Dr. Erica Weir contributes regularly to the Public Health column, while Dr. Eric Wooltorton launched and oversees *CMAJ*'s well-received Practice section. The 2002 fellow, Dr. James Maskalyk, will launch a section on international health this fall. Choi has already set his sights on the journal's section for Review articles — he'd like to see them refined — and he is also working to make the journal's layout more reader-friendly.

Choi, whose parents emigrated to Canada in 1969, was born in Sudbury, Ont., and raised in Toronto, and decided to pursue a medical career after completing his first year at Queen's University. "I wanted something practical, not theoretical. I later chose emergency medicine because it's such a hands-on field."

Medical school provided a chance to spend 2 months in Guyana with Queen's Medical Outreach, and he also proved a diligent student. His awards included the Professor's Prize in Emergency Medicine.

He was also able to maintain his outside interests. He was drummer for a Kingston band, Cellar, which was inspired by bands like U2 and Radiohead. "It's fun to hit things," he says of the drums.

He also hosted a campus radio show called *Sing It on Stage*, in which he commented on and played songs from musicals ranging from *West Side Story* to *Rent*. During his second year he was director/drummer for the Medical Variety Night of skits, song and dance, which raised about \$13 000 for charity.

Choi, an avid golfer, has also nurtured an interest in photography, and especially appreciates how photography allows him to attend to small details that in the end constitute the big picture. He views his work at *CMAJ* in the same light: "Out of the little bits of scientific editing," he says, "you construct a big picture."

He chose emergency medicine for the excitement of working under pressure on all types of cases, and will keep his clinical skills sharp while at *CMAJ* by working at emergency departments in Ottawa. Working at *CMAJ* won't be Choi's only change in 2003/04. This January he will marry psychology student Lisa Couldridge at a family ceremony in Antigua.

Applications for the 2004 editorial fellowship must be received by Dec. 17, 2003 ([www.cmaj.ca/misc/fellowship.shtml](http://www.cmaj.ca/misc/fellowship.shtml)). — Barbara Sibbald, CMAJ



Barbara Sibbald

**Dr. Steve Choi: setting his own beat at *CMAJ***

## FDA seeks distance from "parasitic-Canada" comment

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) says its commissioner, Dr. Mark McClellan, meant "no offence" when he appeared to support a journalist's observations that Canada's drug policies are "parasitic" and that the country has not produced a new drug since 1940.

In a late July airing of the Public Broadcasting Service current affairs show *One on One*, McClellan responded "that's right" after interviewer John McLaughlin said: "Do you think — without causing an international crisis here — that Canada's behaviour is parasitic? They're parasitic because they're living off of the research that we do, and that research is paid for by the taxpayer who has to pay the prices for it through the price of prescription drugs."

The FDA later said the word "parasitic" was pressed upon McClellan and does not reflect his true feelings. "It was a word introduced by McLaughlin," says Peter Pitts, associate commissioner for external relations. "[McClellan] did not use that word. It is not his word and it is not what he thinks."

Members of the Canadian pharmaceutical industry were dismayed after the original interview aired. "I think there must have been a lack of information," says Jacques Lefebvre, spokesperson at Canada's Research Based Pharmaceutical Companies.

He points to a list of more than 40 drugs that have been discovered or largely developed in Canada since 1987. The list includes a high-profile asthma drug, the leukotriene blocker montelukast sodium (Singulair), as well as one of the prime components of the drug cocktail that has been successfully battling HIV and AIDS, lamivudine (Epirivir).

Pitts also downplayed the claim that Canada has not developed a drug since 1940. "I think that we would be more than willing to defer to the people that have done the research," he said. "No offence was intended against Canada's medical establishment." — Brian Whitwham, Ottawa