

Prominent researcher is *CMAJ*'s new editor-in-chief

Enthusiastic. Energetic. Exuberant, but “sometimes impatient,” the sort of man who just wants to get things done, immediately, if not as of yesterday.

According to fellow researchers and friends, a 200-mph whirlwind has just been unleashed in the offices of *CMAJ* in the form of critical care physician and prominent researcher Dr. Paul Hébert, who assumed the post of editor-in-chief today, making him the 16th physician editor since the journal was launched in 1911 (see page 9).

“You have to run hard to keep up with him,” says Dr. Jeff Turnbull, chair of the department of medicine at the University of Ottawa.

“Paul is an incredibly energetic visionary who will bring many new creative ideas to Canada’s premier medical journal,” adds Dr. Deborah Cook, professor of medicine and recipient of a Canada Research Chair in critical care medicine at McMaster University.

Hébert is “a force,” agrees Dean Fergusson, who has coauthored numerous papers with Hébert. He’s so high-energy and juggles so many files, “he’s been called ‘Taz’ before, for Tasmanian devil, for more than one reason.”

Fergusson expects Hébert will approach his new duties with the same zeal he takes to the ski slopes and his sailboat, (in the latter instance, often prompting passengers to cling to the mast). Within 5 years, *CMAJ* will be climbing the ranks of international medical journals; “he won’t settle for anything less,” Fergusson says. “He knows research inside and out. He knows good research when he sees it and he knows bad research when he sees it, and I think, through that, that’s where the journal is going to climb in stature.”

CMAJ Publisher Glenda Proctor and interim Editor-in-Chief Dr. Noni MacDonald, who assumed the duties after the dismissal of Dr. John Hoey last February for undisclosed reasons, say Hébert’s research background should prove invaluable to the journal. He was selected from among 50 national and international applicants.

Hébert, 45, has published more than 180 papers and secured \$27 million in research funding. Among his research interests is an examination of transfusion practice, including the use of alternatives to transfusion and blood conservation, resuscitation fluids and cardiac resuscitation, and trauma research. He led the groundbreaking RCT, “Transfusion Requirements In Critical Care” that affected how clinicians approach blood transfusions worldwide. A 1986 graduate of the University of Ottawa medical school, Hébert also holds a master’s degree in epidemiology.

Initially, Hébert will focus on 3 things: making *CMAJ* the “journal of choice” for the best that Canada has to offer; enhancing its health and clinical research elements and using e-technology to provide information to benefit the practice of physicians.

Hébert will continue working part-time as a clinician-scientist at the Ottawa Hospital. He’s also Vice-Chair of Research in the Department of Medicine at the University of Ottawa; professor of critical care and epidemiology; and currently holds the Chair in Transfusion and Critical Research at the Ottawa Health Research Institute.

“Hébert’s enthusiasm and extensive experience as a researcher and a professor are well suited to lead the future direction and development of *CMAJ*, as both the principal general medical journal in Canada and a top-ranked international journal,” says *CMAJ* Publisher Proctor. In addition, “The CMA has decided to substantially invest in the journal over the next few years, which will allow us to improve it, generally, and also to begin some initiatives that will further engage our readers and attract new readers.”

MacDonald welcomed Hébert’s “great enthusiasm for the journal and inspirational vision. The timing for this new era is absolutely perfect. We have the new governance — probably one of the best in the world — submissions and advertising are up compared to last year and the staff, editors and editorial board have jelled into a great team. Dr. Hébert is just the right person to lead these exceptional people,” she said.

Hébert says while *CMAJ* has been through a rough year, “it’s doing very well. What we are going to do now is to



Barbara Sibbald

Dr. Paul Hébert says his new job as *CMAJ*'s editor-in-chief is a “job of a lifetime.”

continue with the good parts, like the news journalism, and increase the journal’s impact by dramatically enhancing both the quantity and quality of the research elements.”

Hébert’s also committed to making *CMAJ* useful for clinical practice. “We want to make sure the information we publish has an impact on patient care, directly.”

Cook, a “friend and collaborator” for the past 14 years, says Hébert’s familiarity with the needs of clinicians, sharp mind and research acumen should prove enormous assets in achieving those objectives. “He’s one of the world’s leading researchers in critical care medicine. He’s made seminal contributions to our understanding of red blood cell transfusions in the most seriously ill hospitalized patients in the ICU.”

Turnbull says the clinician-scientist will also have to draw on his talents for building and directing teams, mentoring younger colleagues, and the minutiae of administration. “He pays good attention to detail. He is very principled and very outcomes oriented, so he’s enthusiastic about getting the right outcome, sometimes impatient, but always well-intentioned.” — Barbara Sibbald and Wayne Kondro, *CMAJ*

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