

Scotia's health care system was unsustainable as configured, Premier Rodney MacDonald says his government will implement all 103 recommendations of the report, crafted by Corpus Sanchez International. At the core of the recommended overhaul lies the proposition that the province is over reliant on acute care in hospitals at the expense of community and personal health programs.

**Charges dropped:** Six nuisance charges against the former national medical director of the Canadian Red Cross Society's blood transfusion services stemming from the mid-1980s tainted blood scandal have been withdrawn. The

withdrawal follows the October 2007 acquittal of Roger Perreault by the Ontario Superior Court on 4 charges of criminal negligence causing bodily harm and 1 charge of common nuisance. Perreault's lawyer, Edward Greenspan told the court that charges should never have been laid. "Not every tragedy requires a scapegoat or necessitates a finding of blameworthiness."

**Suicide assessments:** The US Food and Drug Administration has quietly changed its clinical trial policies to require that drug companies monitor patients in clinical trials for indications of suicidal thoughts or behaviours, the *New York*

*Times* reported Jan. 24. The *Times* said the FDA has been issuing letters requiring a comprehensive suicide assessment for trials of drugs used to treat obesity, urinary incontinence, epilepsy, smoking cessation, depression and other conditions. The FDA declined comment.

**Wired world:** North American and European spending on electronic health records will reach nearly US\$13 billion by 2012 from a current level of about \$4.4 billion, according to the independent market analysis firm Data-monitor. — Wayne Kondro, *CMAJ*

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## DISPATCH FROM THE MEDICAL FRONT

### Always accessorize

It is a perpetual struggle, to be sure, to persuade young people to use condoms while engaging in practices that, of course, predecessor generations never contemplated. Safe sex does not always trump the proverbial heat of the moment and considerations of sensitivity.

So we thought we'd suggest a new approach to the old safe sex message: accessorizing. In an elegant — if we do say so ourselves — bit of psychological research, a powerful video was used to instill the importance of condom use in those who self-reported as being among the inconsistently clad. One group then received a bracelet as a visual reminder of their new "no glove, no love" outlook on life. Think of it as a "more-than-friendship" bracelet.

The group was asked to recall stories from the video whenever they looked at the bracelet, to remind them of the dangers of unsafe sex.

The question was, would these simple bracelets serve as adequate reminders when it mattered most?

Because, in a world where less than 1 in 5 young people consistently use a condom, just getting the safe sex message out there isn't enough. The real challenge is getting people to remem-



Omid Fotuhi

A "more than friendship" bracelet proved an excellent visual reminder of the "no glove, no love" message.

ber its relevance when distracted by red wine, silk sheets and Barry White.

We were delighted to discover, and subsequently report (*Health Psychol* 2006;25[3]:438-43), that bracelets were up to the challenge.

Bracelet-wearing participants were twice as likely as their non-bracelet-wearing peers to report condom use in follow-up sessions 5 to 7 weeks later.

The bracelets worked even better when wearers had been drinking. While this may seem surprising, it fits with the idea of "alcohol myopia," the notion that a kind of short-sighted thinking lies behind drunken behav-

our. When intoxicated, people pay attention to the information right in front of them, which is right where the bracelets put the safe sex message.

And there you have it. A low-cost, effective addition to the current panoply of safe sex interventions. And slightly more sophisticated than smacking a WEAR A CONDOM Post-it to the forehead of the nearest amorous teenager.

The spin-off potential is limitless. Safe sex bracelets could easily be added to university frosh kits or distributed in high school sex ed classes. While pinning a corsage or boutonniere on young prom-goers, parents could offer a matching bracelet. Condom manufacturers could hide bracelets in specially marked boxes, an adult version of the toy in the cereal box. — Tara Elton-Marshall and Julie Hachey, Waterloo, Ont.

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*CMAJ* invites contributions to Dispatches from the medical front, in which physicians and other health care providers offer eyewitness glimpses of medical frontiers, whether defined by location or intervention. The frequency of the section will be conditional on submissions, which must run a maximum 350 words or be subject to our ruthless editorial pencils. Forward submissions to: wayne.kondro@cma.ca