

from Asahi Kasei, Astellas, Dai-Nippon, Sumitomo, Eisai, Eli Lilly, GlaxoSmithKline, Janssen, Kyowa Hakko, Meiji, Nikken Kagaku, Organon, Otsuka, Pfizer and Yoshitomi. He is on the research advisory boards of Sekisui Chemicals, Pfizer, Janssen and Mochida. His research has also been funded by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and by the Japanese Ministry of Health Labor and Welfare.

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## A “take with a grain of salt” label for Holiday Review articles

For the past decade *CMAJ* has published a series of articles inspired by the holiday season in a section called the Holiday Review. Some of these articles consist of quirky questions addressed with real data whereas others are, in the words of *CMAJ*'s editors, “evidence-free exaggeration and premeditated preposterousness.” Although these articles are a welcome holiday diversion for many physicians, confusion has sometimes arisen because these articles are indexed in MEDLINE as if they were real research articles.

To see if these articles have been mistaken for evidence-based articles, I searched Google Scholar for citations of Holiday Review articles published in 1999–2006 and then reviewed these citations. In some instances, the authors citing Holiday Review articles clearly understood that they were citing a tongue-in-cheek “study.” However, in at least 4 instances, the citing authors appear to have mistakenly cited

evidence-free articles as if they were real studies: a citation<sup>1</sup> of a case report in which the patient was a cartoon character,<sup>2</sup> a citation<sup>3</sup> of my own completely evidence-free paper<sup>4</sup> and 2 other citations<sup>5,6</sup> of Holiday Review spoof studies.<sup>7,8</sup> If *CMAJ*'s Holiday Review articles are to continue being indexed in MEDLINE, perhaps it would be prudent to insert a note at the end of each evidence-free abstract stating that the article is for entertainment purposes only and is not a real study.

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**Competing interests:** None declared.

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## [A *CMAJ* Deputy Editor responds:]

We thank Christopher Naugler for bringing this to our attention. Normally, spoof science does not appear in PubMed searches. However, Naugler's findings show that the system we have been using is neither inclusive nor foolproof. In the future, we will include a disclaimer in the titles of our Holiday Review science articles.

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## Health Check program

One of the major tools to reduce the prevalence of hypertension and improve hypertension control is to reduce the amount of sodium added to our foods during processing. Recently we estimated that hypertension could be prevented in 1 million Canadians by reducing sodium additives to a healthy level.<sup>1</sup> However, a reduction in sodium additives will not happen overnight. A collaborative and progressive approach to reducing sodium consumption by 2020 was recently endorsed by 17 Canadian health organizations, including the Canadian Medical Association, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada and Blood Pressure Canada.

Education of the public is critical, as is the development of foods with less sodium. The Health Check program of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada has already resulted in significant amounts of sodium being removed from many foods. As a result of Health Check's work with the Campbell Soup Company, for example, Blood Pressure Canada recently awarded the company a certificate of excellence for sodium reduction.

Health care practitioners, the food industry and health groups like the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada need to continue to work together to make a healthier diet a reality, and Health Check is an important program that is taking us toward that goal. Health advocates need to focus their energies on companies that continue to add large quantities of salt and other harmful substances to our foods rather than on organizations striving to make Canadians healthier.<sup>2</sup>

**Norm Campbell MD**  
Canadian Chair in Hypertension Prevention and Control, President, Blood Pressure Canada, Calgary, Alta.

**Competing interests:** Norm Campbell received travel assistance from McCain Foods to speak at the regional meeting of the Atlantic Dietitians of Canada in 2007. There was no contact with McCain Foods about the talk or its content.

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