

- Jefferson T, Del Mar C, Dooley L, et al. Physical interventions to interrupt or reduce the spread of respiratory viruses: systematic review. *BMJ* 2009; 339:b3675.
- Jefferson T, Foxlee R, Del Mar C, et al. Interventions for the interruption or reduction of the spread of respiratory viruses [review]. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2007;(4):CD006207.
- Loeb M, Dafoe N, Mahony J, et al. Surgical mask vs N95 respirator for preventing influenza among health care workers: a randomized trial. *JAMA* 2009;302: doi:10.1001/jama.2009.1494.

For the full letter, go to: [www.cmaj.ca/cgi/eleletters/cmaj.109-3066v1#217416](http://www.cmaj.ca/cgi/eleletters/cmaj.109-3066v1#217416)

DOI:10.1503/cmaj.109-2039

## Medical school admissions

Re: "Mission impossible: the quest for medical school."<sup>1</sup> If the author is suggesting that more medical student slots are required, I would agree. If the author is suggesting that successful non-GTA applicants to these two medical schools are not as "bright" as unsuccessful applicants from the GTA, I would like to see some evidence to support his claim.

Mark Otto Baerlocher

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### REFERENCE

- Joel Warsh J. Dispatch from the medical front: Mission impossible: the quest for medical school. *CMAJ* 2009;181:E166.

For the full letter, go to: [www.cmaj.ca/cgi/eleletters/181/8/E166#220034](http://www.cmaj.ca/cgi/eleletters/181/8/E166#220034)

DOI:10.1503/cmaj.109-2040

## Social pain and opioid use

Re: "Opioid prescribing challenges doctors."<sup>1</sup> Increased narcotic prescribing may not be the primary reason for the rise in the street use of these drugs. There may be a common underlying factor — an increase in social pain. The use of functional magnetic resonance imaging reveals that social rejection hurts just as much as physical pain.<sup>2</sup> As a GP who specializes in treating emotional pain, I can verify that this is definitely on the rise. As more people lose their jobs or fear losing them, as more young people despair of any meaningful future, as life becomes harder and

social supports disappear, human pain increases and so does the need for relief. I have found that distressed individuals and families request less pharmacological analgesia when they get more social support. Unfortunately, social policy is going in the opposite direction. As more people are burdened with overwhelming stress, we will see a greater demand for legal and illegal opioids.

Susan M. Rosenthal MD

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### REFERENCES

- Silversides A. Opioid prescribing challenges doctors. *CMAJ* 2009;181:E143-44.
- Eisenberger, NI, Lieberman, MD, Williams KD. Does rejection hurt? An fMRI study of social exclusion. *Science* 2003;302:290-92.

For the full letter, go to: [www.cmaj.ca/cgi/eleletters/181/8/E143#223919](http://www.cmaj.ca/cgi/eleletters/181/8/E143#223919)

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## Correction

A news article on painkiller guidelines<sup>1</sup> stated that oxycodone is "twice as addictive as morphine," after several interviewees expressed that personal belief. However, that belief does not appear to be backed up by any research studies. The *CMAJ* apologizes for the error.

### REFERENCE

- Silversides A. Regulatory colleges to set painkiller guidelines. *CMAJ* 2009;181:464-65.

DOI:10.1503/cmaj.109-2045

## Letters to the editor

In submitting a letter, you automatically consent to have it appear online and/or in print. All letters accepted for print will be edited by *CMAJ* for space and style. Most references and multiple authors' names and full affiliations will appear online only. (The full version of any letter accepted for print will be posted at [cmaj.ca](http://cmaj.ca).)

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