LETTERS

Not all advantages are unearned

I am writing in response to Drs. Samantha Green and Stephanie Nixon's letter about "unearned advantage" perpetuating systemic failures for those who have an "unearned disadvantage."¹ I believe that, in their response to a commentary that raises an arguably legitimate problem,² they perpetuate another problem.

I find it merely amusing that Green and Nixon highlight a concept of unearned advantage, which implies that experts have been nothing but lucky in gaining what appears to be an expertise, and ironically thus call into question the validity of

their own position on the matter (implying that they may well have lucked into their MD and PhD credentials — which I highly doubt).

However, in an age when many patients do not trust doctors or scientific evidence, to their own detriment (e.g., patients who are against vaccination, or who do not complete medication prescriptions), it is almost dangerous to undermine the advice and expertise that doctors and scientists have earned through years of hard work and study by implying that we should not listen to experts because their knowledge has not been "earned" and their advice is thus no better than what a random person told you on the Internet.

Skepticism is always warranted, but to argue that expert opinion is in some way unearned and, by logical extension, not valuable is to threaten the health of the broader population.

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References

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2. Clark B, Preto N. Exploring the concept of vulnerability in health care. *CMAJ* 2018;190:E308-9.

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