

# EDITORS' MESSAGE

As 2010 comes to a close we are pleased to share with you this winter issue of the DMJ. The peer-reviewed research presented herein offers reflection on, and insight into a range of challenges faced in clinical practice, including surgical, diagnostic and inter-professional communication concerns. In DMJ "News", community involvement of several Dalhousie medical students is highlighted. And finally, we are pleased to include a book review in our "Four Humours" section, which was first introduced in the Spring 2006 issue to highlight art, literature, history and humour.

Effective inter-professional collaboration is inarguably a mainstay of quality patient care. Identification and removal of barriers to this collaboration then should be a shared goal of all healthcare professionals. To help us in this, Williams offers primary research that explores the satisfaction of both family physicians and specialists with the referral process. Clarity and timeliness of responses are among the challenges identified by physicians as sources of frustration in the process. He also identified some regional disparity in levels of satisfaction with the referral process, with FPs practicing within the Capital District Health Authority of Nova Scotia reporting a lower level of satisfaction with the process than their colleagues in the rest of the province. This article will be relevant to physicians still in training and those already in practice.

Darnbrough's case report discusses the course of a pediatric patient with AML and acute upper airway obstruction. Initially treated as croup, this child was later found to have fungal tracheitis with invasive *Candida albicans*. This rare infection can have dire consequences for patients, and Darnbrough delivers multiple tips to improve accuracy in diagnosis. Along with recommendations for treatment, the author discusses factors that can predispose to this condition, including immunosuppression and prolonged combination treatment of croup with steroids and antibiotics. Another case report by Bligh, Lo and Nadeem explores the late presentation of a patient with an atrial septal defect (ASD) and pulmonary vein stenosis (PVS) at 42 years of age. She presents with progressive exertional dyspnea, general fatigue, a recent TIA, and additional signs on auscultation. This is one case where a congenital malformation doesn't appear until later in life, and the authors discuss its prevalence, complications and treatments.

Our update on Dalhousie medical student initiatives in the community highlights the reciprocal nature of giving. Jewer offers a reflective look at the importance and benefits of volunteerism by sharing his experiences with "Making Waves", an innovative, student-run program which provides swimming lessons to children with special needs. His rewarding experiences in the program, founded by he and colleague Rachel Shaw in their first year of medicine, is a tribute to the invisible rewards we receive as human beings when we make an effort to foster bonds within our communities, for both others and ourselves. A company of 40 medical students took the opportunity to participate in the annual charity show "For The Health of It". They also were blessed with a bountiful return on the investment of their time, as they took home top prize at the event.

We finish this issue with a captivating book review by Anton Fomenko on Atul Gawande's "Complications." Fomenko discusses the immersive narrative that Gawande uses to expose the uncertainties and tribulations that surgeons experience throughout their careers in this novel that is renowned as a classic, especially among those who wield a scalpel.

We hope that you enjoy this issue and look forward to providing you with another publication in the Summer of 2011.

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