



Violence now leading cause of facial injury in men

Interpersonal violence has surpassed motor-vehicle accidents as the leading cause of facial injury among men, says the head of Sunnybrook Hospital's Division of Plastic Surgery. In a recent issue of *Fact, Figures and Finds*, which is distributed by the Canadian Society of Plastic Surgeons, Dr. Oleh Antonyshyn blamed growing social problems, including a high unemployment rate and heavy alcohol consumption, for a 24.6% increase in the number of reported assault incidents in Canada between 1990 and 1995. The most common injuries for victims of assault are isolated facial fractures, although he said he also sees skull base fractures, spinal cord injuries and fractures to other parts of the body. Women are still more likely to suffer facial trauma in motor-vehicle accidents.

Year	Interpersonal assaults	Vehicle-injury victims
1990	207 331	262 604
1991	226 552	249 198
1992	232 910	249 821
1993	238 470	247 582
1994	268 054	244 975
1995	258 383	241 800

E-mail saves \$\$ for Alberta MDs

More than 20% of Alberta physicians and medical students are receiving certain correspondence from the Alberta Medical Association (AMA) via e-mail, saving thousands of dollars in photocopying, handling and postage expenses. When response to the electronic mailing of the January *President's letter* was favourable, the AMA extended the service to another publication, *MDscope*, in March. The association now reaches almost 1100 members on its 5100-name mailing list by e-mail.

"An important benefit has been the interactivity of e-mail," says Ron

Kustra, the AMA's director of communications. "Responding to the *President's letter* is as simple and as easy as responding to any e-mail message. Although we've only offered a few letters and issues of *MDscope* so far, the response from members has been far greater than through the traditional channels." Members can also receive the *President's letter* by fax. Interested Alberta physicians should let the AMA know their fax number or e-mail address; fax 403 482-5445; kms@amda.ab.ca.

Drug sales worth \$6 billion to manufacturers in 1995

Pharmaceutical manufacturers sold almost \$6 billion worth of patented and nonpatented drugs in Canada in 1995, according to a recent report from the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board, *The impact of federal regulation of patented drug prices*. Of the total, nonpatented drugs represented about \$3.3 billion in sales and patented drugs about \$2.7 billion. The report indicates that between 1988 and 1995 total sales by pharma-

ceutical manufacturers rose 40%. According to Health Canada, consumer spending on patented and non-patented drugs, which is also subject to markups by wholesalers and pharmacists' dispensing fees, totalled \$9.2 billion in 1994 and accounted for 12.7% of total health care spending.

Wooden wheelchair in use in Cambodia

Proving once again that necessity is the mother of invention, a British charity called Motivation has developed a wooden, 3-wheeled wheelchair for use in Cambodia, where many people have lost limbs to land mines. A lack of steel tubing and Cambodia's predominantly rural environment convinced Motivation designers that the wheelchair, called the Mekong, should have a wooden frame and three wheels to make it stable and manoeuvrable in rough conditions. The device costs about Can\$80; more than 1000 a year are now being made at workshops of the Jesuit Refugee Service in Phnom Penh.



**Health
Cuts
Hurt
Everyone**

"Health cuts hurt everyone" is the message the CMA is taking to physicians, politicians and the public during the federal election campaign. By calling attention to high hospital readmission rates and lengthy waiting lists for cardiac surgery, radiotherapy, hospital beds and other services, the public-awareness campaign reminds patients that they are feeling the impact of funding cuts. Dr. Judith Kazimirski, the CMA president, said physicians have been expressing concern about the impact of health care cuts for years. The situation has now reached the point where the basic principles of medicare are threatened, she said.