



# Your Editorial Board: Dr. Richard Smith

Richard Smith, editor of the *BMJ* and chief executive of the *BMJ* Publishing Group, brings a non-Canadian's perspective to *CMAJ*'s Editorial Board. Although he claims he is not "a proper doctor, a proper businessperson nor a proper academic," he does have a medical degree from Edinburgh and a business degree from Stanford University. He is also a professor of medical journalism.

## Who was your most influential teacher?

Phil Gaskell. When we were both casualty officers in New Zealand he told me that I didn't have to pretend that I knew everything.

## What aspect of your work gives you the most pleasure?

Seeing young colleagues do exciting and creative things at my instigation and with my blessing, support and guidance.



## What research paper has had the most influence on your career?

Ivan Illich's paper in the *Lancet* in the 1970s. He argued that "the major threat to health in the world today is modern medicine" and this blew me off the conventional medical career path. His radical thinking is now almost mainstream.

## What are your favourite pastimes?

Running and reading (not simultaneously).

## What alternative profession would you have liked to pursue?

Musician, preferably as a sax player.

## What illness do you fear most?

Depression, because the inability to imagine ever recovering is part of the disease.

## What complementary therapies have you tried?

Aromatherapy, for smelling bad.

## What advice do you have for a young physician?

Remember that the difference between doing good and harm in medicine is finely balanced. Good surgeons, the saying goes, know how to operate, better surgeons know when to operate and the best surgeons know when not to operate. That's true for all of medicine.

## What was your biggest mistake?

Injecting lignocaine into the arm of a small boy to achieve anesthesia but forgetting to inflate the cuff to stop it entering the circulation. Fortunately nothing terrible happened.

## What make and year of car do you drive?

Mostly I cycle, but I do have a 1991 Peugeot 505.

## Health Canada names first rural medicine adviser

Health Canada, in a move designed to assuage concerns about health care outside Canada's cities, has appointed its first executive director of rural health. Dr. John Wootton of Shawville, Que., started work in

mid-September. He is already well known at the CMA for his work with the Society of Rural Physicians of Canada and as editor of the *Canadian Journal of Rural Medicine*, which is published by the CMA.

Health Minister Allan Rock says Wootton will "ensure that a rural health perspective is considered in the formulation and implementation of departmental policies, programs and services."