



Mifepristone is now available in France, Britain, Sweden and China, and it is expected to be released in the US next year despite opposition from antiabortion groups. The drug was declared safe and effective by the US Food and Drug Administration in 1996, but final approval has been delayed pending details about its manufacture. Danco Group, the pharmaceutical firm with US rights to the drug, said mifepristone should be available in the US by next year.

In early 1998, Health Canada wrote to Exelgyn at the request of the BC government and explained how Canada's drug-approval system works. Priddy says this could be interpreted as an invitation. "They've been assured of a 'fair hearing,' that's enough for them to say 'we can do this' without a specific invitation," she says.

Under the Food and Drug Act, Health Canada cannot

ask a company to submit a drug for approval because it would give the perception of a bias in favour of the drug.

Leddy, meanwhile, says Health Canada is "going quite close to the line. They give the impression of encouraging and that's troubling because you can't help but wonder if there is a bias."

The Federation of Medical Women of Canada laments that the drug has become so politicized because it has other potential therapeutic applications that should be investigated. These include possible treatments for endometriosis, breast and brain cancer, and uterine fibroids. "The federation supports any research that gives women more health options," says the president, Dr. Charmaine Royce.

*Barbara Sibbald is CMAJ's Associate Editor, News and Features.*

## Task force offers \$547 000 to solve shootings

The Canadian task force investigating sniper-style attacks on 3 Canadian physicians is offering a \$547 000 reward for help in solving the case. It may be the largest reward in Canadian history. And US police agencies have put up \$500 000 for information leading to the resolution of the murder of Dr. Barnett Slepian in Buffalo last October.

Theoretically, a single person could get more than \$1 million in reward money, says Canadian task force spokesman Inspector Keith McCaskill of the Winnipeg Police Service. "The task force believes the cases are likely linked. If that is solved, ours likely will be too, and if we solve in Canada it could solve the US case."

The Canadian task force has been working since September 1998 to set up a reward; it was finally posted March 19. "We're very appreciative of the fact that we got it," says McCaskill, adding that a reward is an important tool for solving this sort of case.

The reward money was put up by the RCMP, Ontario Provincial Police, Vancouver Police Department, Winnipeg Police Service, Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police Service, the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League and unnamed public groups.

In all, 9 police forces on both sides of the border are investigating 5 incidents that are believed to be linked. All took place around Remembrance Day, all the

physicians involved performed abortions and all were shot in their homes. The injured include Dr. Garson Romalis of Vancouver (1994), Dr. Hugh Short of Ancaster, Ont. (1995), an unnamed Richmond, NY, physician (1996) and Dr. Jack Fainman of Winnipeg (1997). The first fatality occurred last Oct. 23 when Slepian was shot and killed at his home.

An American murder warrant has been issued for Vermont antiabortion activist James Kopp, 44. Kopp, whose whereabouts are a mystery, is charged only in the slaying of Slepian. He remains a "person of interest" in connection with the other shootings.

Anyone with information can call the task force 877 687-3377 (toll free).

**INFORMATION WANTED**  
**\$547,000.00 REWARD**

**NATIONAL TASK FORCE ON DOCTOR SHOOTINGS**  
**Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ontario Provincial Police,**  
**Vancouver Police, Winnipeg Police,**  
**Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police Service,**  
**Canadian Abortion Rights Action League & Other Public Institutions**  
**HAVE JOINTLY OFFERED THIS REWARD FOR INFORMATION LEADING**  
**TO THE ARREST AND CONVICTION OF THE PERSON OR PERSONS**  
**RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE SHOOTINGS.**



**PERSON OF INTEREST ONLY**  
**James Charles KOPP**  
DOB: 54 - 08 - 02  
White Male, 44 years  
Height: 178 cm, 5' 8"  
Weight: 75 kg, 185 lbs.  
Brown Hair, Blue eyes

During the investigation, James Charles Kopp has been identified as a person of interest to the investigators.

A Canada wide warrant for the arrest of Kopp for violation of Canada's immigration laws is in effect.

