

24/7 access to pediatric nurses who are trained in pediatric palliative care. In my “black bag” there are continuous opioid infusions, central venous lines, phlebotomy supplies and treatments for seizures and hydration, to name a few items. Only within a system of continuous care in the community are patients able to stay in their homes and receive high-quality treatment for serious illness. Until we make seismic shifts in how we view health, illness and community, many of us will present to our local emergency departments for want of all kinds of care that might be better delivered at home.

Dawn E. Davies MD

Medical Director, Pediatric Palliative Care Program, Stollery Children's Hospital, Edmonton, Alta.

Reference

1. Walkinshaw E. Back to black bag and horse-and-buggy medicine. *CMAJ* 2011;183:1829-30.

CMAJ 2012. DOI:10.1503/cmaj.112-2013

Form and function

When Canadian researcher Dr. John R. Taylor examined foreskin under a microscope, he found specialized sensory tissue having “the rigidity and form associated with specific function.”¹

The interdependence between form and function is a basic principle of biology. If by her statement in the *CMAJ* news article by Roger Collier² that there are “no health benefits to having foreskin” Dr. Dinh is implying that specialized tissue of the penis has no function, then she is challenging an axiom of science.

Dennis C. Harrison BSc BA

Writer, Vancouver BC

References

1. Taylor JR, Lockwood AP, Taylor AJ. The prepuce: specialized mucosa of the penis and its loss to circumcision. *Br J Urol* 1996;77:291-5.
2. Collier R. Vital or vestigial? The foreskin has its fans and foes. *CMAJ* 2011;183:1963-4.

CMAJ 2012. DOI:10.1503/cmaj.112-2014

Some letters have been abbreviated for print. See www.cmaj.ca for full versions and competing interests.