

indifference could only prevail if something was missing. ... It was mercy."

Young does not spare the medical profession, either. He emphasizes that the pharmacology education of medical students is in shocking disarray, while continuing medical education for practising doctors is fatally conflicted by commercial sponsorship. He is disappointed that few doctors report adverse drug reactions and explores why they may consider it futile to file such reports to a government agency that often appears to ignore them.

Elected to Parliament in October 2008 as a Conservative representing Oakville, Young considers that Canadian parliamentarians face more stringent conflict-of-interest disclosure than doctors or academics. He decries the nefarious influence of political fundraising (especially from businesses and unions), and applauds Prime Minister Stephen Harper for instituting reforms to federal campaign finance.

Yet even as he struggled to pursue justice for Vanessa, this prominent Christian had to earn a living, partly as a government appointee adjudicating Ontario liquor and gambling licences.

But above all, Young comes across as a man of genuine conviction and real courage — exactly the kind of MP most Canadians voters say they want. In a telephone interview he described how a "very senior person in the pharmaceutical industry" asked to meet him during his first campaign for Parliament in 2007, a contest he lost in a close vote. Young claims his interlocutor suggested that "about 300 industry

votes here in Oakville" might not go Conservative because he "had been hanging around with some very anti-industry people on the West Coast." (Young said this reference was to the UBC Therapeutics Initiative, an academic group that was disbanded on the recommendation of a British Columbia government-appointed task force, that was dominated by representatives from the brand-name drug industry). Young says he suggested this "senior person ... take his vote and shove it."

Asked what he now hopes to accomplish as a Member of Parliament, Young replied that he is but "one of 308 MPs." How heartwarming to hear next that he was applauded by many colleagues for supporting a New Democratic Party private member's bill intended to facilitate provision of generic antiretroviral drugs to Africa.

The issue is simple, says Young: "On one hand, you have the wealthiest companies in the world, whose CEOs each make more money than all the MPs in a Parliamentary meeting room, combined. On the other hand, you have 40 million Africans who are going to die a painful death from HIV. I would rather listen to the grandmothers supporting those people than to the drug company lobbyists." But does any MP this gutsy and forthright stand a chance of getting near the real levers of Canadian political power?

Death by Prescription has a few faults. The monikers of key protagonists vary between real names and pseudonyms, sometimes confusing even an attentive reader. Young might also have

been kinder to those wonderful drugs that have profoundly improved human health, and to their discoverers and manufacturers and to the doctors who prescribe them appropriately. Certain important assertions of fact could be referenced in greater detail or more convincingly. And while Young's critique of how business interests corrupt democratic government is penetrating, he is less clear on how to fix a broken system. When asked in an interview for more concrete ideas, he replied that "I put everything I know in the book — now it's up to others to do something."

He's right. Terrence Young says he made an agreement with God that if he did this painful work diligently and faithfully, he will see Vanessa again. If 307 other MPs and thousands of other Canadians read this book, the momentum to improve prescription drug regulation, promotion and utilization might become unstoppable. Then Vanessa Young's cruel and untimely death could truly be redeemed.

Thomas L. Perry MD

Department of Anesthesiology,
Pharmacology & Therapeutics
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, BC

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