



## Canadian Family Physician editorial fellowship

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*We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.*

Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945)

*Small opportunities are often the beginning of great enterprises.*

Demosthenes (384-322 BC)

It is a shocking fact that many medical journal editors have little or no formal training in medical editing when they begin their careers. A 1998 survey study of editors-in-chief of medical specialty journals revealed that 45% of respondents had no formal training in editing skills.<sup>1</sup> Things would not be much different if the survey were carried out today.

### The write path

In my case, involvement in family medicine research and writing led to an interest in medical editing. An interest in medical editing led to a part-time position as an Associate Editor at *Canadian Family Physician (CFP)*, beginning in January 2008. A very short apprenticeship (less than a year) led to the opportunity to become Scientific Editor, with the departure of my predecessor, Dr Diane Kelsall, to the *Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ)* in 2009. Dr Kelsall was an experienced and talented medical editor, having worked in addition to her time with *CFP* for several years as the editor of *Informed*, a well-respected publication of the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences in Toronto, Ont. I was also fortunate in that short time to work with and learn from an experienced editorial team.

Surprisingly, there are still very few opportunities for training in medical editing anywhere. Currently there are only 6 medical editing fellowships that have a medical degree as a prerequisite. These are sponsored by the *Journal of the American Medical Association*,<sup>2</sup> the *New England Journal of Medicine*,<sup>3</sup> the *CMAJ*,<sup>4</sup> *American Family Physician*,<sup>5</sup> *Annals of Emergency Medicine*,<sup>6</sup> and the Radiological Society of North America.<sup>7</sup> *American Family Physician* is the only family medicine journal that offers this kind of training and experience. It is time that changed.

It is clear that medical editorial fellowships are an effective way to build capacity. Twenty-three people

have held the prestigious Fishbein Fellowship at the *Journal of the American Medical Association* since its inception in 1977, and more than half of these individuals have spent some or all of their later careers in medical publishing and communications.<sup>2</sup> One former fellow has been the editor-in-chief of 2 medical journals. Similarly, the much newer *CMAJ* editorial fellowship has produced several graduates who have gone on to work as medical editors (eg, Eric Wooltorton at *CMAJ*, Stephen Choi at *Open Medicine*) or in medical journalism and writing (eg, Sally Murray and James Maskalyk).

Family medicine has grown as a discipline in several ways over the past decade. One of the most important developments has been the tremendous growth of family medicine research and scholarship in Canada.<sup>8</sup> *Canadian Family Physician* must strive to match these developments in family medicine. One critical way is to begin to train future editors of our national journal.

### Welcome opportunity

To that end, *CFP* is pleased to announce the inauguration of an editorial fellowship and to introduce our first fellow, Dr Jessica Fulton. Dr Fulton completed her undergraduate degree in life sciences at Queen's University in Kingston, Ont. She received her doctor of medicine degree at the University of Toronto and recently completed her residency in family medicine at Women's College Hospital at the University of Toronto. Dr Fulton joins *CFP* as a part-time Associate Editor for 1 year and will be involved in all aspects of the journal's production, participating in the screening of manuscripts, all aspects of the peer-review process, as well as taking on medical editing projects on behalf of the journal. Welcome, Dr Fulton. 

#### Competing interests

None declared

#### References

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