

Nothing to whine about

The problems in our health system pale in comparison with other countries. Canadian physicians should think twice about whining too loudly, as a recent study¹ published in the *South African Family Practice* journal illustrates. This survey examined South African physicians who had emigrated to Saskatchewan—218 were permanently registered there in 1996. By far the most common reasons for emigrating were fear of violence and threats to personal security, lack of a future for their children, and South Africa's uncertain political and economic future. Most had settled into a Canadian lifestyle very readily, and their children had adapted even more quickly. Fewer than a third expressed any likelihood of returning to South Africa.

Compared with the violence and instability of present-day South Africa, Saskatchewan must appear to be a paragon of peace and quiet. It is ironic that a part of Canada that cannot attract Canadian-trained physicians is so attractive to some of the brightest from elsewhere. It is also most unfortunate to see evidence of their brain drain, despite our gain, when South Africa's needs are so desperate. Reading this study about how newcomers perceive Canada made me realize, once again, that we are a privileged lot.

—Tony Reid, MD, MSC, CCFP, FCFP
Scientific Editor,
Canadian Family Physician

Reference

1. van der Vyver J, De Villiers P. The migration of South African graduates to Canada. A survey of medical practitioners in Saskatchewan. *S Afr Fam Pract* 2000;22(1):17-22.

To spank or not to spank

I am writing in regard to the article¹ in the May issue, "If I shouldn't spank, what should I do?" I appreciate the

material presented but wish to make comments that, in some situations, can preclude the question "If I shouldn't..."

As the father of four young children, I openly (at least in this forum) "confess" that my wife and I do spank our children to discipline them. What I mean by spanking is a couple of smacks to the buttocks with an open hand (which might result in transient redness but no lasting marks), in the context of a secure loving relationship. More importantly the criteria for spanking need to be clarified: it is to be used only when a child has intentionally disobeyed (defiant misbehaviour) and is carried out with loving action, not angry reaction. There are times when I feel like spanking but know I should not, and there are times when I regretfully discipline with spanking because I know I should, so that my children learn that it is not OK to behave wrongly.

—Jeff Kornelsen, MD, CCFP
Mission, BC

Reference

1. Tidmarsh L. If I shouldn't spank, what should I do? Behavioural techniques for disciplining children. *Can Fam Physician* 2000;46:1119-23.

New approach to treating *Escherichia coli* O157:H7?

The small town of Walkerton, Ont, is dealing with an outbreak of *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 in their water supply. This enteritis, which is

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