

### Concern about process

I am greatly concerned with the editorial process at *Canadian Family Physician* that led to Mr Thoma's article, "The other side of the speculum,"<sup>1</sup> being published in the national, professional journal of a College that purports to represent me.

I refer you to the principles of family medicine the College espouses and seeks to foster in the residents who are training in family medicine. As stated on the College website, "The patient-physician relationship is central to the role of the family physician."<sup>2</sup> The Reflections piece by Mr Thoma does not display any understanding of the importance of the patient-physician relationship, his position of power as a medical professional, and the inevitable power imbalance between himself and his patient. There needs to be recognition that when he is holding the speculum, the patient's needs come first.

This failure to carry out a patient-centred approach leads me to question how this piece met editorial standards and was thought to be appropriate for publication in a journal that professes to speak for myself, my colleagues, and my profession.

—Christine Tai MD  
Ottawa, Ont

#### References

1. Thoma B. The other side of the speculum. *Can Fam Physician* 2009;55:1112.
2. College of Family Physicians of Canada. *Four principles of family medicine*. Mississauga, ON: College of Family Physicians of Canada; 2006. Available from: [www.cfp.ca/English/cfpc/about%20us/principles/default.asp?s=1](http://www.cfp.ca/English/cfpc/about%20us/principles/default.asp?s=1). Accessed 2009 Dec 15.

### A lesson in patient-centred interviewing

**F=FEELINGS:** The first few paragraphs of Mr Thoma's article<sup>1</sup> elicited empathy, the next few triggered a sense of foreboding, and by the second half of the article, I was simmering with anger.

**I=IDEAS:** I was appalled that a third-year male *medical* student would think this way then put such words to paper, shocked that *Canadian Family Physician* would print this demeaning Reflections piece, and hopeful that this student will discover the respect integral to promoting healing in the doctor-patient relationship.

**F=FUNCTIONAL IMPACT:** I already have to push myself to have a Pap test now that my female family physician has retired. Now I am going to wonder, with slight trepidation, what goes on in the head of my male physician during this examination.

**E=EXPECTATIONS:** A third-year medical student should know how to express ambivalence thoughtfully, have the skills to begin to develop rapport within 2 minutes, and have an understanding of the "whole person", so that he knows a middle-aged women in stirrups does

not think, "oh, a young buck!" when about to undergo an internal examination!

—Gail R. Greenberg MSW  
Regina, Sask

#### Reference

1. Thoma B. The other side of the speculum. *Can Fam Physician* 2009;55:1112.

### Printing error?

Publication of Mr Thoma's miserable attempt at humour<sup>1</sup> represents either an unfortunate printing error or a regrettable and worrisome lapse in *Canadian Family Physician's* editorial judgment. Rarely have we seen such a distasteful confluence of grade-school raunchiness and thinly veiled misogyny between the covers of a supposedly reputable medical journal.

To suggest that crass juvenile observations like "week-old tampons are not what get me up in the morning" even remotely approach acceptable standards for a peer-reviewed publication would be like suggesting Mr Thoma demonstrates even a beginner's understanding of compassionate patient-centred care.

To counter every pathetic instance of misinterpretation, failed learning, social ineptitude, and sexually abusive innuendo would be to accord this author's "reflection" more time and attention than it deserves. I can only hope that he is sincere in his decision to forego a career in family medicine, thereby sparing countless future female patients the agony of having to deal with his apparent Neanderthal tendencies. I do worry, however, about what he will be thinking as he looks into the eyes of his ophthalmology patients.

—Keith D. Ogle MD CCFP FCFP  
Saskatoon, Sask

#### Reference

1. Thoma B. The other side of the speculum. *Can Fam Physician* 2009;55:1112.

#### The top 5 articles read on-line at cfp.ca

1. **Reflections:** The other side of the speculum (November 2009)
2. **Clinical Review:** Not enough vitamin D. *Health consequences for Canadians* (May 2007)
3. **Clinical Review:** Necrotizing fasciitis (October 2009)
4. **Child Health Update:** Use of over-the-counter cough and cold medications in children (November 2009)
5. **Clinical Review:** Complementary and alternative medicine for the treatment of type 2 diabetes (June 2009)