

On creativity and innovation

Getting into the minds of creative giants at Family Medicine Forum

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We hope to serve as a reference to all young dreamers of today.

Guy Laliberté, founder of *Cirque du Soleil*

In describing family medicine research, Dr Wendy Norman, Chair of the 2013 Family Medicine Forum (FMF) Research Committee, invited us to substitute the word *research* with *innovation* or *creativity*. Dr Norman suggested that, whereas *research* might cause one's eyes to glaze over or one to quickly turn his or her attention to another topic, *innovation* and *creativity* conjure up a vision of something new, interesting, and even, perhaps, exciting.

Recently, the *CMAJ* published an article entitled "A blueprint for medical research stardom,"¹ which pointed out the value of creativity in research. It quotes Dr Jack Hirsh, Professor Emeritus of hematology and thromboembolism at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ont, and winner of the Canada Gairdner International Award (2000) for excellence in biomedical research, who said, "To come up with important questions and find innovative ways of answering them, creativity is a must."¹


I think that Drs Norman and Hirsh are onto something. Last year's FMF Research Day and FMF research stream presentations were huge successes, and judging from the number of scientific abstract submissions received for 2014, looking at research as a creative endeavour might be a winning formula.

So it should not be considered a coincidence that the theme of Research Day 2014, which will take place at FMF in Quebec city, Que, on Wednesday, November 12, is "On creativity and innovation." It also happens that Quebec is the birthplace of several world-renowned creative enterprises that have inspired young minds to reach for their dreams of building a better society. *Cirque du Soleil* in particular represents, for many young Canadians, the ultimate reference in creative possibility, social responsibility, and success. It is thus a great honour for us to welcome Mr Bernard Petiot, Vice President of Casting and Performance for *Cirque du Soleil*, and Mr Patrice Aubertin, Director of Research and Teacher Training Programs at the National Circus School and SSHRC Industrial Research Chair for Colleges in Circus

Arts, who will deliver the Research Day plenary at 8:30 AM on Wednesday, November 12. They will deliver inspiring messages about integrating creativity and working toward innovation in family medicine research—in addition to a few exciting surprises along the way.

Creativity is often more associated with artists than with researchers. While the scientific process is deeply rooted in creative innovations, how many of us have received formal training in the creative process? Is formal training in creativity even possible? Can one learn to think outside the box? Is the creative process innate? Is it magic? Or should scientists try to learn from artists and creative giants like *Cirque du Soleil*? Perhaps our special sessions on creativity will provide some answers.

In addition, this year's line-up of research events at FMF includes a number of thought-provoking, stimulating, and interactive presentations. Mr Gil Favreau, *Cirque du Soleil's* Director of Social Action and Community Relations, Global Citizenship Service, will open FMF 2014 with the keynote address entitled "Can art change the world?" on Thursday, November 13. Plan to attend the Dangerous Ideas Soapbox, where you will hear the top 4 daring ideas submitted about how to make a difference in health care, and the ever popular FMF Pearls: Best Clinically Relevant Research from Research Day, which will showcase the top 4 oral abstracts originally presented on Research Day. There will also be a special presentation from our Quebec members entitled "Quebec innovations linking family medicine practice and research," which will highlight 4 topics: a novel knowledge network, new opportunities for family physicians and their residents in clinical research, opportunities associated with case management in primary care, and the Quebec Alzheimer disease plan.

All of these events are designed to help you understand the inextricable link between innovation, creativity, and research. Please join us at this year's research events during FMF. We look forward to seeing you there! 

Dr Fleet is Chair of the Family Medicine Forum Research Committee of the College of Family Physicians of Canada's Section of Researchers, and Assistant Professor in the Department of Emergency and Family Medicine and Research Chair of Emergency Medicine at Laval University in Quebec city, Que.

Reference

1. Collier R. A blueprint for medical research stardom. *CMAJ* 2014;186(11):821. Epub 2014 Jun 23.

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Cet article se trouve aussi en français à la page 951.