



CAEP | Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians
25 years of leadership in emergency medicine
ACMU | Association canadienne des médecins d'urgence
25 ans de leadership en médecine d'urgence

www.caep.ca

PRESIDENT / PRÉSIDENT

François Bélanger, MD

Canadian Journal of Emergency Medicine
Journal canadien de la médecine d'urgence

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF / RÉDACTEUR EN CHEF

Grant Innes, MD ginn@interchange.ubc.ca
University of British Columbia, Vancouver

SENIOR ASSOCIATE EDITORS / RÉDACTEURS ADJOINT

Garth Dickinson, MD garth.dickinson@rogers.com
University of Ottawa, Ottawa

James Ducharme, MD jim_ducharme@bigfoot.com
Dalhousie University, Saint John, NB

MANAGING EDITOR / RÉDACTRICE ADMINISTRATIVE

Heidi Innes, BSc, BEd ginn@interchange.ubc.ca

ASSOCIATE EDITORS / RÉDACTEURS ASSOCIÉS

EM ADVANCES (original research)
Ian G. Stiell, MD, MSc, University of Ottawa, Ottawa
Jacques S. Lee, MD, University of Toronto, Toronto

CJEM JOURNAL CLUB
Michael J. Bullard, MD, University of Alberta, Edmonton

CASE REPORTS
Anthony S. Taylor, MD, University of Calgary, Calgary

SMALL URBAN AND RURAL ISSUES
James M. Thompson, MD, Dalhousie University, Charlottetown

METHODOLOGY: THE SCIENCE OF EM
Riyad B. Abu-Laban, MD, MHS, University of British Columbia,
Vancouver

PHARMACOTHERAPY
Peter Zed, BSc(Pharm), PharmD, University of British Columbia,
Vancouver
Jeff Eppler, MD, Kelowna General Hospital, Kelowna, BC

ED ADMINISTRATION
Jeremy M. Etherington, MD, St. Paul's Hospital, Vancouver

EDUCATION
Tim Allen, MD, Université Laval, Quebec City

STATE OF THE ART (review articles and topical updates)
Laurie J. Morrison, MD, MSc, University of Toronto, Toronto

TOXICOLOGY
Roy Purssell, MD, University of British Columbia, Vancouver

CONTROVERSIES (issues and commentaries)
Jeffrey Freeman, MD, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich.

PEDIATRIC EM
Bruce Minnes, MD, Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto
Ran Goldman, MD, Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto

HUMOUR AND HUMANITY
Virginia Robinson, MD, Grand River Hospital, Kitchener, Ont.

DIAGNOSTIC CHALLENGE
Robert McGraw, MD, Queen's University, Kingston, Ont.

INTERNATIONAL EM
Garth Dickinson, MD, University of Ottawa, Ottawa

MEDICAL MYTHOLOGY
Mel Herbert, MD, University of Southern California, Los Angeles

RESIDENT ISSUES
Jonathan Davidow, MD, University of Alberta, Edmonton
Cameron MacGougan, MD, University of Alberta, Edmonton

WEB SITE
Robert Sweetland, MD, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg

Vol. 5, No. 3, May / mai 2003

TABLE OF CONTENTS • TABLE DES MATIÈRES

IN THIS ISSUE • DANS CE NUMÉRO 151

LETTERS • COURRIER 154

Thank you, T. Allen.

ED ADMINISTRATION • L'ADMINISTRATION DE LA MU

Analysis of factors influencing length of stay in the emergency department

P. Yoon, I. Steiner, G. Reinhardt 155

CJEM JOURNAL CLUB • CLUB DE LECTURE JCMU

Should emergency physicians use B-type natriuretic peptide testing in patients with unexplained dyspnea?

C.M. Hohl, B.Y. Mitelman, P. Wyer, E. Lang 162

MEDICAL MYTHOLOGY • MYTHES MÉDICAUX

Seafood allergy is a specific and unique contraindication to the administration of ionic contrast media

A. Schlifke, J.M. Geiderman 166

BRIEF REPORTS • LES EXPOSÉS BREFS

Can we assess asthma severity using expiratory capnography in a pediatric emergency department?

L. Evered, F. Ducharme, G.M. Davis, M. Pusic 169

INTERNATIONAL EM • MU INTERNATIONALE

Voyage to Antarctica

T. Renouf 171

DIAGNOSTIC CHALLENGE • DÉFI DIAGNOSTIQUE

Life-threatening bradycardia with narrow QRS complex, secondary to severe hyperkalemia

M. Anderson, A. Herd 175

Answer

M. Anderson, A. Herd 219

EDITORIAL BOARD / CONSEIL DE RÉDACTION

Jeffrey R. Brubacher, MD, Vancouver
Greta Cummings, BScN, MEd, Edmonton
Jason Frank, MD, MA (Ed), Ottawa
Ran Goldman, MD, Toronto
Robert McGraw, MD, Kingston, Ont.
Marco Sivilotti, MD, MSc, Kingston, Ont.
Christian Vaillancourt, MD, MSc, Ottawa
Andrew Worster, MD, MSc, Hamilton, Ont.

TRANSLATION / TRADUCTION

Danielle Séguin-Tétrault, MTrad

MARKETING AND ADVERTISING SALES / MARKETING ET PUBLICITÉ

Keith Health Care info@keithhealthcare.com
Toronto: 905 278-6700 or 800 661-5004; fax 905 278-4850
Montréal: 514 624-6979 or 877 761-0447; fax 514 624-6707

The *Canadian Journal of Emergency Medicine (CJEM)* is owned by the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians (CAEP) and printed by Dollco Printing, Ottawa.

CAEP Head Office: 1785 Alta Vista Dr., Ste. 104, Ottawa ON K1G 3Y6; tel 613 523-3343; fax 613 523-0190; cjem@caep.ca

Editorial inquiries, submissions to CJEM, and all other correspondence:

Canadian Journal of Emergency Medicine
c/o Dr. Grant Innes
Department of Emergency Medicine
St. Paul's Hospital, 1081 Burrard St.
Vancouver BC V6Z 1Y6
tel 604 806-8980, fax 604 608-9810, ginnes@interchange.ubc.ca

Instructions for Authors, Service Information: see Table of Contents. Address changes or requests for permission to reproduce items in *CJEM*: contact Susan Norrington at the CAEP Head Office.

Publications mail agreement no. 0344505499. Return undeliverable copies to the CAEP Head Office. USPS periodical postage paid at Champlain, NY, and additional locations. ISSN 1481-8035.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada, through the Canada Magazine Fund, toward our editorial costs.

© 2003 Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians
Association canadienne des médecins d'urgence



All prescription drug advertisements have been cleared by the Pharmaceutical Advertising Advisory Board.

PUBLISHER / ÉDITEUR

CJEM is published every 2 months (January, March, May, July, September and November) for CAEP by the Canadian Medical Association, Ottawa. CAEP and the CMA assume no responsibility or liability for damages arising from any error or omission, or from the use of any information or advice contained in the journal, including articles, editorials, case reports, reviews, media reviews, letters and advertisements. All editorial matter in *CJEM* represents the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of CAEP or the CMA.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR / DIRECTEUR EXÉCUTIF, PUBLICATIONS
Pat Rich

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR / DIRECTRICE ASSOCIÉE, PUBLICATIONS
Jill Rafuse

EDITOR / RÉDACTRICE, PUBLICATIONS
Jennifer E. Raiche
800 663-7336 x2114; fax 613 565-2382; jennifer.raiche@cma.ca

PRODUCTION
Kathryn A. Freamo
Nicole Barbeau, Clara Walker

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING / ANNONCES CLASSÉES
Beverly Kirkpatrick, Deborah Rodd, Tracy Huckabone
613 731-8610 x2127/2314; fax 613 565-7488; advertising@cma.ca

DISPLAY ADVERTISING / ANNONCES PUBLICITAIRES
Nancy Pope, 613 731-8610 x2111

EM ADVANCES • INNOVATIONS EN MU

2003 CAEP/ACMU Scientific Assembly	
Oral Abstract Presentation Schedule	176
Poster Presentations	178
Scientific Abstracts	179
Author Index	210
Key Word Index	212

HUMOUR AND HUMANITY • HUMOUR ET HUMANITÉ

Blue gown, white coat <i>V. Hanlon</i>	213
---	-----

NEWS • NOUVELLES 215

Checking the vital signs

CALENDAR • CALENDRIER 216

INSTRUCTIONS POUR LES AUTEURS 221

SERVICE INFORMATION • SERVICES 225

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING • ANNONCES CLASSÉES 230

INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUTHORS

See January 2003 issue, or www.caep.ca/cjem



ABOUT THE COVER:

Gentoo penguins, Antarctic Peninsula

Dr. Tia Renouf, working as an expedition doctor, travelled to Antarctica aboard the *Akademik Ioffe* with her husband, photographer Peter Knauss [see page 171].

Cover by: Peter Knauss