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Medical school tuition fees continue upward spiral

Tuition fees at Canada's 16 medical schools have risen by an average of 9.9% for the 2001/02 academic year, Statistics Canada reports. The increase is the highest among all monitored programs. The new fees will average \$6654, compared with \$6057 last year; they have roughly doubled in the past 5 years. Ontario's 5 schools have the highest average fees (\$11 546). The University of Toronto and University of Western Ontario have the country's highest fees, at more than \$14 000 annually, while Quebec has the lowest (\$2267).

Statistics Canada says medical school fees are second only to those charged to dental students, which will average \$8491 this academic year, an increase of 7.8%; the average fee for law students is \$4355.

The increases worry professional associations, and 8 of them, including the CMA, have responded by creating the National Professional Association Coalition on Tuition to fight them. The coalition presented a position paper to the Commons Standing Committee on Finance last year, warning that high fees "create socioeconomic barriers" to professional programs. In an interview, coalition Chair Bill Easton of the CMA said the latest increase doesn't reflect the actual size of the hikes, particularly in Ontario. "The increases since Ontario deregulated tuition fees total more than 100% over 5 years, and I worry that this will metastasize across the country. In Canada we are rapidly approaching a situation in which we have medical education only for the affluent." — *Patrick Sullivan, CMAJ*

Newly minted family doctor CMAJ's newest editorial fellow

Dr. Eric Wooltorton's parents never had to look far to know that he was destined for great things — the stains on the basement ceiling were a constant reminder of one of his early experiments involving methane gas. Wooltorton, a family physician, gene researcher and former editor of the *Queen's Health Sciences Journal*, joined *CMAJ* in July after completing his residency in family medicine at the University of Ottawa. During his 1-year stint he will be involved in all aspects of journal production, including the peer-review process.

Wooltorton always felt drawn to a research career, but after volunteering at a local hospital he decided to add clinical practice to his repertoire.

This duality has driven his career. Along the way, he has collected scholarships and 5 awards, including the Henry Kaufman Memorial Prize that Queen's University awards for "the greatest human understanding and responsibility toward the needs of patients."



Barbara Sibbald

Dr. Eric Wooltorton (left) will be keeping a close eye on *CMAJ*.

Wooltorton, 29, already has publication credits in *Biological Psychiatry* and *DNA and Cell Biology*, the latter as lead author of an article dealing with the cloning and sequencing of a novel gene involved in fat cell differentiation in mice. Eventually he hopes to work as a researcher and small-town FP, with a special interest in geriatric medicine and palliative care. "Palliative care involves a shift from the acute focus on curing to caring. As physicians we can go much further by focusing on caring."

For now, he's "thrilled" to be at *CMAJ* and is relishing the chance to hone his critical-appraisal skills. He will keep his clinical skills sharp by working after-hours at a family medicine clinic.

Wooltorton received his undergraduate degree in human genetics from McGill. A growing fascination with the human genome project led him to the cancer research labs at Queen's as a master's student. In medical school at Queen's he helped resurrect the *Queen's Medical Review* (which was renamed the *Queen's Health Sciences Journal*) and served as editor in 1997–98.

During his residency, he delivered almost 200 babies and enjoyed "nearly every" clinical rotation. He also wrote a guide for people wanting to exercise more and hopes it will one day accompany Canada's physical activity guide.

Wooltorton, an Ottawa native, grew up on the capital's outskirts. He met his wife Susan, a speech therapist, at McGill; their son, Ian, was born 20 months ago. He now describes himself as a "father who happens to be a physician." Ian was born in the midst of Wooltorton's residency. "For a while I didn't sleep at all," he says. "Babies are like one-in-one call."

Wooltorton becomes *CMAJ*'s fourth editorial fellow. Fellows are paid at a rate equivalent to their residency experience. Applications for 2002 are invited (see details at www.cma.ca/cmaj/fellowship.htm). — *Barbara Sibbald, CMAJ*