

What are we doing with our time?

So, what's so different about this year? Normally, in the first half of August business exigencies remain properly buried and the expected chaos of September consciously ignored. Here it is the dog days of summer, a time that in my experience at least, lent itself to the consumption of afternoon flagons of local ale while reading trashy novels and putting your super-ego in park. Until I actually stopped for a minute to take stock I hadn't realized that something was fundamentally different with this picture. I still start each Salt Spring summer day attired in a variety of colorfully silk-screened tank tops so loose and long that the two-waist-size larger shorts are conveniently concealed from a spouse whose summer girth, for some unfathomable

reason, progresses in an opposite and much heralded health direction. However, for some very bothersome reason this August finds me sitting writing this with a brain that refuses to stop whirling around a big unruly bag of intrusive logistics, none of which is likely solvable from where I sit.

This time of year I thought was supposed to be a time when we could all put aside the trappings of a "responsible life" for a few slow, reflective family-friendly weeks. A time when we could all re-establish those really important connections with the people who share your DNA, their respective partners, and those few really close friends who you've managed to neglect for the previous 12 months.

However, this year everything seems to be speeding up. The times

with the family and friends didn't feel like anything close to "quality," and preoccupation probably is an accurate description of my presence in those lost moments. I'm not sure exactly what is going on but I don't seem to be alone. I have had a number of both doctor and non-doctor friends say that they are experiencing exactly the same thing. They all seem to have a sense that the pace of their lives is accelerating and more than one of my friends has recently mentioned that their professional and personal life is totally and equally out of control. They have no time to slow down and enjoy their family, friends, or hobbies because everything and everyone is crushed and squeezed with totally unrealistic time demands.

I think I should be clear that my initial reason(s) for deciding to bore everyone with this topic lacked even a splash of altruism as my notoriously variable levels of creative energy was driven by a complete absence of focus. The fact that I couldn't think of what the heck to write about (what with all my preoccupations noted above) was compounded and magnified by the fact that I had just found out that I had only a few hours to submit an editorial to my slave-driving managing editor. However, I have been thinking about time management, time constraints, lack of time, and the apparent acceleration of time as I age for quite some time now. How many of us actually sit down and think about what we are doing with our time? How many of us critically look at what kinds of things we should be filling our time up with? Obviously time isn't speeding up, it's just that we keep putting the wrong things into the available slots. We should all take stock and make a personal commitment to ourselves (and

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to our significant others) to slow our lives down as much as possible by filling up those non-essential time slots with stuff that expands us as caring, creative human animals and not with yet another professional commitment.

I don't know about you but in about 30 seconds I was able to jot down about 10 things that I currently do that are unnecessary and that I plan to remove from my calendar over the next 6 months.

There, I can't believe how much better I feel. The problem is I don't know what to put in to the empty slots. I think I need help!

—JAW

Medical writing prize: \$1000 for best student article

The J.H. MacDermot Prize for Excellence in Medical Journalism comes with a cash award of \$1000 for the best article on any medicine-related topic submitted to the *BC Medical Journal* by a medical student in British Columbia.

The British Columbia Medical Association awards the annual prize to the finest medical student manuscript received by the *BC Medical Journal* that year. The prize honors Dr John Henry MacDermot (1883–1969), who became the editor of the *Vancouver Medical Bulletin* at its formation in 1924, remaining at the helm until 1959, when it became the *BC Medical Journal*. He was editor of the *BCMJ* until he retired in 1967. Dr MacDermot was also past president of both the VMA and the BCMA.