

## Editorial independence

**A** recently posted entry on DocLounge (an e-mail discussion group) made mention of the *BC Medical Journal* and the members of its Editorial Board. The comments unfortunately were quite inappropriate, misleading, and incorrect. As the e-mail discussion group is an open communication vehicle, I felt it appropriate to respond to the comment in an equally open communication vehicle, here, in the pages of the *BCMJ*. In addition to the inaccuracies, several of the author's comments related to something philosophically near and dear to our hearts here on the Editorial Board and as always, whenever I'm given the opportunity I don't mind reminding our readers (and anyone else who will listen) about our collective "rock-hard" commitment to the tenets of basic editorial ethics.

In this instance, the author alleged that two *BCMJ* Editorial Board members had been fired "a couple of years ago" for failing to tow the BCMA line and that this violated freedom of the press. I take issue with his comments as they are not only false, but more importantly, they are characterizations of the Editorial Board's philosophical and political allegiance that are untrue and unsettling.

I have been the editor of the *BCMJ* for 12 years and a member of the Editorial Board for a further 10 years, and there has never, to my knowledge, been a "firing" of any members of the Editorial Board. I wonder where this information came from, as all of us here at the *BCMJ* are terribly interested to see the names of the individuals he made reference to.

Secondly (and more importantly as this is the real reason I'm writing this), the *BCMJ* has made it clear over the years that it is a publication for BC's doctors by BC's doctors. We have stated in numerous editorials that the Editorial Board studiously maintains an arm's length relationship with the political core of this association. The association for its part has agreed to recognize the editorial sanctity of the *BCMJ* and continues to appropriately act as the steward of the publication. Dr Mark Schonfeld has always been a staunch supporter of the *BCMJ* and its independence, and has never used his position to inappropriately influence either the staff (his employees) or the Editorial Board, nor does the BCMA Board attempt to influence clinical/scientific content—much less the makeup of the Editorial Board. We certainly publish material prepared by the BCMA, but the editorialists of the *BCMJ* claim no allegiance to any political group or movement within the association while acting as an Editorial Board member.

So, to the author of the DocLounge posting, no, there has never been a firing of an Editorial Board member. We welcome all contributions, however critical of the BCMA. We only ask that they not be baseless gossip. The dissemination of misinformation—compounded by opinion that is shrouded in innuendo—is inappropriate and unacceptable. I suggest to the writer: in the spirit of collegiality, step back, check your facts, and be kind to your colleagues, or at least give them the benefit of the doubt until you are certain that they are the spawn of Satan. This kind of verbal defecation does nothing positive for anyone, particularly you.

— JAW

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