

## Harper a no-show for AIDS conference

In 1981 AIDS was first recognized in North America. Twenty-five years later, much scientific knowledge has been gained, and significant medical advances have been realized. I was a first-year medical student in 1981 and the word “AIDS” started as a whisper in the corridor of the hospitals. By the time I graduated an infectious etiology for AIDS had been confirmed, and with it emerged the hysteria, prejudice, and ignorance regarding its contagiousness. My classmate Dr Peter changed so much of that for the people in British Columbia and Canada with his very public media presence chronicling his challenges in dealing with this disease. He put a compassionate, credible, informative, and human face on HIV/AIDS. Looking back again I realize what a profound impact Dr Peter made at the time.

Fast forward to 2006. It is now 25 years later, a milestone that both the *New England Journal of Medicine* and the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* have recognized in recent publications. This is also the 10th anniversary of the Dr Peter Centre in Vancouver. Despite the advances of medicine in this last two-and-a-half decades, there is still no cure for HIV/AIDS, and the need for compassionate care continues. Hurray for the Dr Peter Centre.

By the time this is published, the 16th International AIDS Conference in Toronto will have closed. What will be remembered of this conference 10 or 25 years from now? I hope it isn't that Mr Stephen Harper didn't show up.

Personally, I would have crawled over broken glass for the opportunity to be in the same room as Bill Clinton and Bill Gates. Their combined political and financial capital is enor-

mous, and I have no doubt that their vision and leadership will make a significant positive impact on the global HIV/AIDS pandemic.

As physicians we know that communication is very much more than the words that are used. Body language

and tone of voice are critical elements in the process of coding and decoding of messages. Likewise, caring for people is so much more than just a statement or policy or a directive. You can really only show that you care by

*Continued on page 312*



Metropolitan Hotel Vancouver – Experience an intimate yet effervescent scene. Discover attentive concierge services, elegant amenities & award-winning cuisine ... right in the city centre.



METROPOLITAN  
HOTEL  
VANCOUVER

645 HOWE ST. VANCOUVER BC CANADA T 1.800.667.2300 F 604.643.7267 reservations@van.metropolitan.com www.metropolitan.com

\*Rate is valid until December 31, 2006. Subject to availability. Rates do not apply to group bookings of 10 rooms or more. Taxes and gratuities not included.

**Harper a no-show**

*Continued from page 311*

showing your presence. Nothing demonstrates compassionate caring like giving of yourself, and Mr Harper knows this well. His personal visit to Afghanistan was an important, tangible gesture to Canadian military personnel, as well as the citizens of Canada. As a physician I regret that Mr Harper delegated the task of representing the government of Canada to his minister of health. I know Canadians care about the global pandemic of HIV/AIDS and I am sure Mr Harper does too. It just would have been better if he could have said it in person.

—HMO

**We the people**

*Continued from page 310*

assumption by a group of connected individuals from the political core of our national association that it is okay to subordinate the firmly stated political wishes of a majority of BC's physicians and put forward their own preferred candidate. Regardless of the fact that there is a constitutional loophole that allows this aberration, I have great difficulty accepting the fact that these connected few in Ontario would even consider trampling all over the rights of BC's physicians. Such action would reflect a paternalistic mind-set by implying that "we know what's best for you."

I should be clear that this has nothing to do with individuals and everything to do with democratic

rights, yours and mine. No individual or group should assume they have the right to subordinate my/our rights to their own political agenda.

There is a very real possibility that this event may never come to pass as there is likely to be a fair amount of bad press about all of this. But I am still tremendously bothered that there appears to have been a strong political lobby within our national association to push a "preferred" political agenda forward with very little thought to the democratic rights of the doctors in BC. I wonder what will be the next freedom deemed to be unnecessary or unimportant.

—JAW

## Do you control your practice or does it control you?

Whether you are a medical student, resident, locum or a practicing physician, Scotiabank is committed to assisting you in any way we can. That's why we invite you to meet Patty Scrase, our Scotia Professional expert. With more than 30 years of banking experience (12 years focusing on the medical industry), Patty can work with you to assess your financial needs and goals. Patty is Scotiabank's regional contact for all your medical banking needs and will be pleased to review your current banking arrangements and ongoing future requirements.

**Please call or email BCMA Care Specialist, Patty Scrase, to arrange your personal consultation.**



**Patty Scrase**  
Manager, Professional  
Banking

### Small Business Banking



™ Trademarks of The Bank of Nova Scotia.

Vancouver Commercial Banking Centre and Main Branch  
34th Floor  
650 West Georgia Street  
Vancouver, BC  
Cell: 604 619-4699  
pat.scrase@scotiabank.com