

## I think I need a doctor

I read with interest, as I'm sure most of you did, the headlines in our morning newspaper a few weeks ago that the government intends to invest a lot of money in a program dedicated to making family practice a more attractive career choice for medical students.

I love the word *propitious*. It is seldom heard in conversations not dominated by Lord Black, but it nicely defines a welcome, favorable event, and this propitious media release from the premier's office came just as I was about to write a "cows are out of the barn" editorial about the future of family practice.

I am at a point in my life when things inevitably start to go sideways with various organ systems, and I have

no doubt that at least one of my nasty genomic messages will make themselves known before too much more time goes by. Knowing this, I have had some nascent sense that as I seem to be like most everyone else, I might need to have the same kind of family doctor that I've been recommending to family and friends for the past 36 years. Added to this rare insight, I am starting to get tired of treating myself for various minor strains and sprains (as well as a couple of fractures and dislocations).

As a recognized Canadian expert in the art of rationalization, my usual response to the inevitable queries from the person I just told to go see her family doctor is "well, I just don't have the time to see a doctor this week."

However, for quite some time now I've been on the edge of accepting the reality that my frowning, head shaking, much-smarter-than-I life-partner has been right all along. I really do need a family doctor. Unfortunately, there doesn't seem to be many of them willing to see new patients. I know I could go and lean on an old friend (which I do already from time to time) and establish a real professional relationship with someone I could call my own family doctor.

And I most likely will, I hope, before it's my family calling one of our doctor-friends because I can't for some pathologically significant reason. But what about that huge cohort of citizens who don't have the luxury of easy access to doctor-friends they can call in a hurry?

I hope the new government funding initiatives to reenergize family practice and family practice training, in addition to some innovative ways of looking at what constitutes a family practice, will not only attract a new generation of committed, skilled family doctors to an extremely important component in our provision of health services, but also convince long-established family docs to stay and help fix something that just might be worth fixing.

I think I'm going to leave my metaphorical barn doors open. As any farmer knows, if some of the cows decide to stay behind they just might be able to call the others back.

Now, who should I call for an appointment?

—JAW

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