

Forms

I recently filled out a number of forms for one of my palliative patients. For those uninitiated in this process, there are quite a few boxes to complete, and in my case I forgot to enter the diagnosis in one of them. Therefore, it was returned, and rightly so. After resubmitting the corrected form I received another fax telling me that my form was out of date and that I needed to use the updated one. You would assume that this is a rare occurrence but you would be wrong.

So commences my form rant. The form police seem to take great satisfaction in monitoring and returning all that is wrong. Does it really matter if the form used is out of date? It usually looks almost exactly like its predecessor and contains all of the necessary information. How about thanking me for the referral and sending me the new form for my next use? I have even been sent a request to fill out new referral forms for my patients who are on a wait list because the form was updated since they were initially referred. Seems to me that that shouldn't be my responsibility, but I don't want to single out the JPOC

Pain Clinic for their audacity as that would be unfair. The majority of these form tribulations involve publicly funded facilities such as hospitals. Interestingly, private clinics are more than happy to accommodate patients presenting with incorrect forms.

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When the new fecal immunochemical test (FIT) program started, it would take a whole month for someone at central intake to glance at the referral form and then send it back to the health region for booking. Another similar frustration is to send a referral letter to a specialist and have it returned 3 months later declining the referral for various reasons. "Dr Smith no longer operates on patients born in June," for example. Couldn't

they have looked at the birthdate when they received the letter? I am also sure many specialists get frustrated with referrals that don't contain clinical details, results, etc. Specifying "I think he has a problem with his heart or lungs" probably doesn't cut it.

I also enjoy how everything is urgent, particularly with insurance or disability forms. "Urgent" to me suggests that someone is going to die imminently unless I put down my doughnut and do something heroic, and that even then it would probably be better if I kept eating and sent one of my more talented colleagues.

Every day the forms pour in—disability tax credit applications, persons with a disability designation, CPP disability applications, short-term/long-term disability updates, medical EI, notes for physiotherapy/massage/work absence/orthotics/dentures/emotional support animals, and more.

If you can't beat them, join them. So to end this rant I am going to fill out an application form for medicinal marijuana because drinking at work is socially unacceptable. —DRR



Advertisement for Pacific Fertility. The background is a photograph of a baby wearing a blue knitted hat and a blue rope around their neck. The text is overlaid on the image.

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It's a cruel world

It feels to me as though the world is becoming more and more openly callous and harsh. We have terrorists blowing up picnicking families because they were of the wrong faith in the wrong country. We have American presidential candidates bolstering their vote count by fanning the flames of the lowest common denominators of hatred and fear among citizens who are looking for something to believe in and someone to blame for their perceived misfortune. We see photos of children in Africa who were burned alive by the multiple dozens and girls kidnapped because they have the effrontery to want to go to school. We have public figures proactively and openly admitting to choking, and others drugging, naive intimate partners, and a legal system that can't convict them. Society seems expected to accept that this is simply a sexual choice that the assailants make and that the victims should know better. We have bloggers and trolls who make it their business to cruelly call out and sometimes fatally bully whomever they want to hurt, protecting themselves behind the anonymity of their Internet handles. Refugee babies are tragically washing up on the shores of the countries to which their families were fleeing. The movies and games that make the most money (and it's always about money) seem to be those that glorify violence, gore, unequal sex, and destruction. Ancient cultural icons that stood for thousands of years are toppled in minutes and crushed in the name of religious empowerment. If you love the wrong gender you can be legally targeted in some places in the modern Western world. Reality television is scripted and edited to create as much discomfort and conflict as possible. Profits have taken over happiness. Children are being killed by guns in their classrooms in record numbers and the loudest voices are those promoting the idea that

more guns in classrooms is the only answer. Cruelty, disdain, disrespect, and derision are everywhere, and it feels insane.

I know that in the grand scheme of things we live in a relatively non-violent time. There are no crusades

We should all be extremely grateful that our chosen profession is one in which we place value on compassion, kindness, caring, listening, and healing. Where judgment and hatred have no place, even unofficially.

or systems of government that officially rely on violence to deal with conflict. Having police and systemized law enforcement in place means that crimes can be prevented or at least tried in a court of law to mete out appropriate punishment most of the time. However, thanks to the globalization of communication we hear about and are at least subtly influenced by all of this cruelty whenever we open a screen, newspaper, or magazine. It's not just physical violence; it's the pervasive mood of a generation. And it's very hard to get away from it.

Until you go to work.

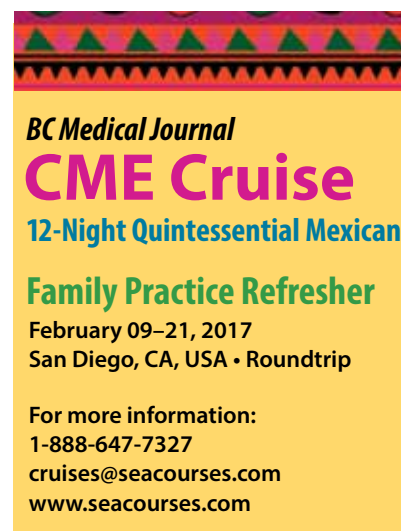
We should all be extremely grateful that our chosen profession is one in which we place value on compassion, kindness, caring, listening, and healing. Where judgment and hatred have

no place, even unofficially. Where differences in religious or philosophical beliefs may create differences in opinion about medical issues, but where we are obliged to maintain professionalism and fairness in our offices and treatment rooms when making decisions that may not be what we would choose for ourselves.

We are so privileged to have work whose entire basis is to be kind, healing, and helpful to patients and their families. We may not always think about it so literally, but when you compare it to what is flying around out there, it is an amazing relief.

In this cruel world our practice has become a little sanctuary where we can strive for kindness and caring. It's not that we should ignore the rest of the world, but every one of us who chooses kindness as the underlying tenet of our practice decisions, even when it's hard, is pushing back a little bit at the nastiness that exists outside of work. It's really wonderful to have work that is fulfilling and challenging, and that allows us to choose to be on the giving side of kindness every single day. Maybe one day, if we keep trying really hard, our collective kindness will rule the world.

—CV



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