

send reply to: 6267 Castille Court
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Dr. Bruce Squires,
CMA Journal,
Canadian Medical Association,
1867 Alta Vista Dr.,
Ottawa.

23 February 1992

This letter is not for publication in the CMAJ.

Dr. Squires,

I was stunned by your publication of the extremely abusive article concerning environmental sensitivities (p 585, CMAJ, 15 February 1992). It is not the ruling in the case described which is offensive, but the manner in which the story is told.

It is obvious that your news and features editor knows nothing about sensitivities, nothing about the history of abuse persons with sensitivities have endured at the hands of doctors in Canada and elsewhere, nothing about the unethical, unscientific, and grossly unprofessional nature of that abuse.

Blurred thinking on the part of the author confuses doubts about clinical ecology and a ruling about an employer's liability in one case with the legitimacy of this concern in general.

Throughout the story a woman with a chronic health problem was instead implied to be a chronic complainer. The author points out that "all tests were normal" without including the obvious and scientific observation that problems with diagnosis of sensitivities have been recognized by such bodies as the Ontario Medical Association, and that LCDC and the Ontario Ministry of Health are sponsoring research to develop such tests.

Such articles, written by ignorant armchair critics, foster extremely damaging attitudes. Families have broken up, when one spouse decides the other's

concern is illegitimate. Personal and professional reputations have been ruined, resulting in millions of dollars damages. Doctors have caused increased disability when they have dismissed this concern out of hand while treating patients for other problems. There have been hundreds of personal tragedies, including many suicides.

Your cruel arrogance in publishing such a biased account of this illness, which affects thousands of Canadians, is all the more offensive considering the fact that I know you are well aware that people with sensitivities have suffered immense damages as a result of attitudes fostered by such articles.

Who the hell do you think you are? Do you think you are God that you can knowingly conduct yourself in a way that contributes to human suffering and damages?

If you were going to publish the opinion of a judge, why not also publish that of George Thomson, whose 1985 report remains ignored by your organization and your publication. If you were going to mention a book describing clinical ecology as "Junk Science in the Courtroom", why not mention "Chemical Exposures: Low levels, High Stakes" which is based on a study which won a Macedo Award from the World Health Organization. If you were going to relate a case involving an insurance company, why mention that dozens of Canadians receive disability benefits? If you tell the story of an employer's negative response to environmental sensitivities, why not that of the Canadian government, which provides reasonable accommodation, or Sears, which recently asked women in a particular area to refrain from wearing perfume because a number of women working there had sensitivities?

A CMAJ article published 15 November 1985 has been directly linked to abuse which resulted in suicides. I suspect the current article will contribute to similar circumstances. It is not up to others to assume responsibility for the consequences of your abusiveness. You and the CMA must assume responsibility for what you have done.

I am hereby asking you to publicly apologize for the tone and implications of this article. I will be bringing the article to the attention of the Chief Coroner of Ontario, who is familiar with at least one suicide that resulted from abuse recommended by Stewart's article. I have brought your own disgusting

attitude to the attention of the Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, and will be bringing it to the attention of the Chief Commissioner of the Ontario Commission, and before other parties who have been helpful in addressing damaging attitudes fostered in the past by your sleazy colleagues.

You must take responsibility for your own abusiveness. I will not be responding on your behalf. Your publication has proven itself a vehicle for hate literature against persons disabled by sensitivities.

Your gall, your disrespect for human life, fills me with shame.

Chris Brown
Ottawa Branch President
(613) 837-7173

P.S. Are you publishing this crap, which obfuscates the issues, in an effort to protect those in your membership who are abusing persons with sensitivities from lawsuits?