

higher regard than in Canada." In the next paragraph he discussed a much more tangible reward: family physicians might expect to earn up to \$130 000 (US) in their first year in practice, with federal income tax much lower than in Canada.

Apparently without intending to, Webb later drew attention to the cost of the much-vaunted respect that physicians in the United States receive when he notes that some 30 million citizens in the United States have no health insurance and that for others copayments and high premiums represent a formidable expense. He notes "a palpable insecurity not apparent in Canada."

The equation seems quite obvious to me: an underinsured population with uncertain and unequal access to health care, plus income differentials that widen the gap between rich and poor, equals wealthy physicians held in high esteem by insecure, less wealthy patients.

For Canadian physicians who yearn for the "good old days," the United States must seem attractive; those of us who recognize the relationship between low socioeconomic status and poor health should feel proud to live in a society where wealth affects survival rates less than in the United States.²

In these times of fiscal restraint and global markets, we physicians should do everything in our power to ensure that the equation elucidated by Webb is not put into effect here. Surely respect built on fear and deprivation is not worth the human costs.

— Adam Newman, MD, CCFP
Kingston, Ont

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Homeopathic remedies for asthma

As a physician with a special interest in homeopathy, I enjoyed reading your article, "Are cockroaches really harmless?"¹ Homeopaths have been using potentized (repeatedly diluted and vigorously shaken) solutions of cockroach for some time to treat cases of asthma characterized by suffocation with a marked accumulation of mucus. These solutions' action in relieving asthma was found accidentally in 1890 by a patient who happened to drink tea in which a beetle had been infused. This is a good illustration of the principle of *similia similibus curantur* (like cures like) that, along with potentization, individualization, and holism, is a fundamental tenet of homeopathy.

Family physicians can use *Blatta americana* (the great American cockroach) and *Blatta orientalis* (the Indian

cockroach), among other homeopathic remedies, to treat acute asthma. However, acute episodes will continue to recur unless the patient is treated constitutionally with a more deep-acting remedy.

A review of 25 years of homeopathic studies was presented in the *British Medical Journal*,² while *Pediatrics*³ and *Lancet*⁴ have published studies showing the effectiveness of homeopathy in acute childhood diarrhea and asthma, respectively.

— Stephen Malthouse, MD
Association of Complementary
Physicians of BC
Victoria

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