

Why I will never be president of the OMA

Michelle Greiver, MD

There have been many editorials and soapbox ponderings about why women are not becoming more involved in organized medicine. This is really a motherhood issue: we are so busy being mothers to our kids, our patients and (sometimes) our significant others that we simply cannot mother any politicians, medical or otherwise. What follows is a case report detailing why I will never be president of the OMA.

Like all moms, I function as my kids' alarm clock. Once they're up, they need to be reminded to dress and feed themselves. My son can't find a T-shirt he likes, so he fishes one out of the laundry basket. My daughter can't find a bow that goes with her outfit, so mom has to help. We actually manage to finish everything on time and get in the car. Off to school.

It is Monday, the day I volunteer at the school during first period. Today I am discussing personal hygiene with the Grade 6 class. I have to explain why failing to bathe for a week makes you smell like an old shoe (bacteria), why feet smell like Gorgonzola if you don't wear socks (bacteria) and why armpits smell bad if you don't use deodorant (bacteria). Washing your hands after a bowel movement is good (no bacteria), and flossing your teeth is really good (fewer bacteria), but make sure you wash your hands first. I manage to stretch this over 40 minutes and the kids appear to enjoy the talk, probably because there is no quiz after it. I have a brief discussion with my son's teacher about why he takes about 4 hours to do an hour's worth of homework, and then I'm off to the office.

A young G7P0TA6 is waiting for me, trying to decide if she'll be a TA7.

Nice elderly people are waiting for their flu shots.

A young diabetic patient arrives smelling like an old shoe. He gets a lecture on personal hygiene.

A philanderer's wife comes in for follow-up of her PID.

The landlord has already turned off the air conditioning in the building because it is officially fall. It is, but it is also a beautiful warm day and there is a slightly rancid smell in the air (see above re: bacteria).

The school secretary calls because my daughter is feeling unwell but not quite unwell enough to go home.

A drug rep brings in some lunch so she can talk about the new miracle diet drug, except that she can't quite talk about it yet because approval has been held up. The pastrami on the sandwich is too dry. We talk about the bouts of diarrhea caused by the competition's diet drug. I'm really not that hungry.

The school calls again. Sarah is feeling a bit worse and now wants to go home. This is problematic because I really

can't cancel the 15 patients booked for this afternoon. Hmmmm. I try calling my afternoon sitter and, thank goodness, she is able to take a taxi to pick up Sarah at school. I call the school back to pass on the news.

The afternoon ebbs and flows with check-ups, more vaccinations, phone calls, and (Yippee!) not a single

new insurance form to fill out. I return home to find that my husband has taken Sarah to her swim class. Apparently her illness improved markedly after the taxi-ride-home-from-school therapy.

After supper, it's on to homework. Miraculously, 4 hours of work get compressed into 1 because it's due tomorrow. Then we do the bedtime routines — brush and floss after washing your hands (no bacteria), and then into pajamas.

After the kids are in bed, the adults sit down to discuss scheduling. We have to make appointments for the kids at the dentist, optometrist and hairdresser, all of which must cause minimal disruption to schooling and other activities. The master calendar comes out and possible dates for all of the appointments are slotted in; the hairdresser slot is taking on increasing urgency.

Then it's time to go to bed.

So that's why I'll never be president of the OMA — I'm just far too busy.

Besides, I'd pick up too many bacteria shaking all those hands.

Michelle Greiver is a family physician practising in North York, Ont.

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