Editorial: A New Perspective
Laura Hinz BSc (Meds 2011)

A stack of Canadian Medical Association Journals (CMAJ) sits on my kitchen table. I have big plans to read and understand each article, to expand my knowledge, to feel like a real doctor. But more often than not those CMAJs simply serve as a place mat for the novel or newspaper that I lay over top. It is always with a twinge of guilt that I delay reading these journals. It feels like they are something I should read, that I have a responsibility to read. This guilt is made all the more poignant by the question that always seems to accompany my decision to leave the CMAJ closed- why don’t I want to read it? Didn’t I spend the better part of the last decade doing everything I could to get into medical school? Didn’t I experience an almost embarrassing level of excitement when that first issue was delivered to my mailbox?

That question has nettled me all year as the stack grew ever taller. But this summer my clinical elective preceptor helped me to answer that question. She said that the CMAJ isn’t necessarily relevant to me at this point in my training. We simply haven’t learned enough to either completely understand every article nor to find it always interesting. Much like a book on skydiving would be mildly intriguing to an earth-bound reader, it doesn’t become riveting until you’ve taken that first leap. This summer, many of our classmates leapt for the first time. We left behind our textbooks and lectures and faced the real world of medicine.

The Summer Supplement is a record of those experiences in the real world. This issue of the UWOMJ is considerably different from the regular print issues. The purpose of the articles in this issue is not just to inform, but to inspire and celebrate. These are the true experiences of our classmates; they remind us of our own summer experiences, encourage us to move beyond the familiar, and commemorate the successes of our peers. By capturing these experiences in an article for the Summer Supplement, we are able to leave a record of all the things we accomplished this summer, be it research, clinical electives, or travel.

In addition to different goals, the perspective of this issue is remarkably different. Normally the authors’ gaze is into the literature; the Summer Supplement has challenged us to raise our eyes up from our textbooks, beyond the walls of our classrooms and to see how medicine exists in the real world. This perspective is simultaneously exciting, overwhelming, and inspiring. Suddenly we saw that diseases that were described in our notes happen to real people, and it is now up to us to dredge up all the facts that we painstakingly learned throughout the year and apply them to actual practice.
A written discourse tells the world how you want to be remembered. It is a record of your thoughts and perceptions, your level of knowledge, your interests. That is what makes this issue of the UWOMJ different from the regular print issues and from publications like the CMAJ. This compilation of articles is all about perspective. Authors were encouraged to write an article that would appeal to the medical student, both in terms of knowledge level and interest. While the goal was also to describe common presentations, diagnostic tools, and treatments, the primary aim of this issue was to create a record of medicine through the eyes of the Classes of 2010 and 2011.

It is immediately apparent that each article in this collection has a slightly different structure. The reason is that the authors were encouraged to be creative. Since perspective plays such a pivotal role in this collection, each author was encouraged to choose a style that worked for their topic, their case, their style of writing.

Given this emphasis on perspective, I hope this collection of articles will not suffer the same fate as my CMAJs. The subsequent articles are each relevant to this point of our education, simply by virtue of the fact that they were written by members of the intended audience. The diverse compilation that follows will hopefully help you to broaden your perspective, to consider medicine as an entity outside of the classroom, and to inspire you to approach your studies in such a way that will prepare you for your own leap into the real world of medicine.