



**To the editor  
Maclean's Magazine**

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**Re: Do You Trust Your Doctor? *Maclean's*, August 23, 2010**

On behalf of Canada's registered nurses, I wish to commend Maclean's for calling public attention to the issue of medical errors. The Canadian Nurses Association is a strong advocate for patient safety, which is a moral and ethical imperative for all nurses.

Many factors contribute to patient safety risks, and excellent work has been done to develop and implement patient safety protocols across the country - but more needs to be done. Chronic shortages of registered nurses, physicians and other health-care professionals can lead to fatigue, burnout and an increased reliance on unregulated care providers for complex tasks they are not trained to handle. Electronic health records, which will enable better communication among health-care workers, have yet to be implemented across Canada.

We know that improving the practice environments of health-care professionals can markedly reduce medical errors, wait times and cases of burnout. More research is needed to further our understanding of the numerous interconnected factors that contribute to missed or delayed diagnoses, medication errors and other adverse events.

CNA and other groups such as the Canadian Patient Safety Institute continue to call for increased funding into research on patient safety. Actions, of course, speak louder than research – so it is vitally important that we immediately apply what we have already learned regarding the root causes of problems. Canada's registered nurses continue to press for continuous improvements to the health system. Even small changes can yield tremendous rewards in terms of positive health outcomes and lives saved.

Judith Shamian, RN, PhD, LLD (hon), D.Sci. (hon) FAAN  
President