

## Penelope Gray-Allan — in memoriam

Jim Ducharme, MD

VERSION FRANÇAISE À LA PAGE 302

I first noticed a tremor when she was playing pool at our annual Editorial Board dinner last year in Calgary. In November, her typing had started showing errors; soon after she called me to say she was going to see a neurologist and have a CAT scan. Five months later, she was gone.

During Penny's shockingly brief illness, we were going through chaos — the journal had lost its heart and soul. We scrambled to keep *CJEM* running; articles got lost, authors were upset, all of us were working overtime. Yet every single time I started to even think about complaining, a huge hand smacked me in the face: I was not the one who was sick. I kept stumbling, trying to figure out how we could survive at *CJEM* without Penny — I could not even begin to imagine how Doug, her husband, and her 2 children were coping. I do know we all feel a great loss.

Now that Penny is gone, how will we remember her? Penny will always be remembered for her knack and her joy in personally connecting with people. Penny often knew about people's vacations, their cats, their upcoming home renovations or their family issues. Many people involved with *CJEM* had a connection with Penny in this manner, and she truly made herself the "face of the journal," adding an important human aspect to *CJEM* as a result. She knew why they could not do a review, yet could somehow cajole them into it anyway. She could smooth over problems or conflicts and keep *CJEM* moving forward.

At the same time she was a perfectionist and someone absolutely committed to *CJEM*. She knew every detail of the journal and routinely took her laptop with her on vacation just so she could keep up with *CJEM* work. She



attended emergency medicine conferences as a layperson so she could understand emergency physicians better. Her attention to detail made us become organized and was integral to our becoming indexed. As Grant Innes said, "She took over the ME job and brought to it editorial expertise." Every week Penny went above and beyond the call of duty, working far more hours than what she ever claimed on her invoices. She took on her shoulders the whole transition from a paper system to an electronic submission one — and made it almost seamless. We

would not have the journal we do without all that she did.

In the end, perhaps most important is how Penny changed me. I remember phone calls where we laughed about our own stupidity, where she cried from being exhausted trying to make *CJEM* work. I remember her cajoling me to get things done; her calling me when other editors would not respond or would be overly critical. Penny made me care — in a way I never thought I would — about this journal we call *CJEM*. She made it *her* journal and through some infectious process made me gratefully recognize that *CJEM* was *my* journal. I will miss Penny. It hurts to know she is gone. I can only hope to keep *CJEM* going as she would have wanted as my homage to her. I can only hope that her family stays together in this time of terrible loss. Goodbye, Penny. Thank you for having graced our lives and making me a better person.

**Competing interests:** None declared.

**Keywords:** memorial

**Correspondence to:** Dr. Jim Ducharme; [cjem@rogers.com](mailto:cjem@rogers.com)

Editor-in-Chief, *CJEM*

All editorial matter represents the views of the authors and not necessarily those of *CJEM* or the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians.

*CJEM* 2010;12(4):301