

# Appointment with Pohlman

## Dead man bleeding



By Ralph Pohlman

You may have been following the bizarre story of Tony Rosato, the troubled comedian who has been in jail for about two years and who was recently found guilty of criminally harassing his wife.

He is convinced that his wife and daughter are not really his wife and daughter, but that they have been replaced by impostors who are impersonating them. Odd as this may seem, it is an uncommon, but not rare, psychiatric syndrome known as Capgras' Syndrome. (Sort of like that old movie "The Invasion of the Body Snatchers".)

Like many other medical occurrences, this syndrome is named after the physician that first described it, (although some syndromes are named after the first described patient) and so we have Alzheimer's, Hodgkins', Tourette's and hundreds of others.

Capgras' is really a thought disorder known as a delusion, which is defined as "a fixed false belief, not changeable by logic". Let me give you an example. I once had a patient who believed he was dead. I know, it sounds crazy and, of course, it is.

"But you are walking around," I said.

"Yep, just dead bones, walking around."

So let's check on the "not changeable by logic".

"Do dead men bleed?" I asked.

"Nope," he said. I grabbed a stylet and pricked his finger, where a drop of blood appeared. "So, what do you think of that?" I asked.

"Well, I'll be damned," he said. "Dead men do bleed!"

As I said, "Not changeable by logic."

Not that I completely understand why Mr. Rosato had to be in the slammer and untreated all this time. He clearly should have been found not criminally responsible and sent to the forensic section of a psychiatric hospital for treatment. Someplace like Penetang, or Whitby.

There is a condition, first described by a Dr. de Clerambault in 1942 and occasionally reported in medical journals, but which still remains fairly rare. The patient develops a delusional belief that a person, with whom they may have had very little contact, is in love with them. Part of the delusion incorporates the belief that the people around the targeted person are preventing him or her from declaring their love.

De Clerambault's Syndrome, also known as Erotomania, was actually quite famous a few years ago. You may remember that a Saskatchewan farmer, I think his name was Robert Keeler, believed that Anne Murray was in love with him and sending him secret messages through her songs.

He turned her life into a nightmare. On one occasion he was standing in his field when the RCAF acrobatic planes flew overhead, heading east. They were known as the Snowbirds and, since Anne Murray had recorded a song called Snowbird, he took that as a signal that she wanted to see him. He headed east and ended up on her doorstep.

The funny thing is that the nearby village in Saskatchewan, population about 50, genuinely believed that Keeler had something going on with Anne Murray. In most cases the patient is a woman who suddenly develops the belief that a man, often a famous politician or celebrity, is in love with her.

There are also a number of cultural disorders that may show up in various primitive societies. Sometimes the names of the disorder show up in our language. For example, Amok, which occurs only in men, primarily in Malaysia, is a period of being withdrawn followed by an outburst of wild rage, killing and destroying until overpowered. That's where we get "running amok".

In the arctic there is Piblotto, much like Amok, but in females, where the victim runs around tearing off her clothes, crying like a bird and destroying property and is later amnesic of the episode. North American Indians had an occasional disorder called Windigo in which the victim believed he was being transformed into a Windigo, a flesh-eating forest monster.

My favourite is Koro, which is a transient psychosis that occurs mostly in Malaysia or the Philippines and is associated with the obsessive fear that the penis is retracting into the abdomen and, when that happens, the patient will die. They often counter this by tying the penis to the leg. Or, when they are asleep, members of the family are enlisted to keep an eye on it.

A few years ago, the professor of psychiatry at U. of T. gave a lecture on this stuff at a university in the USA. On coming back to Canada they held him up at the border because of all these "dirty pictures" he had in his luggage. (Penises tied to legs, etc.)

We never let him forget that.

## A HISTORIC VOTE

By Kate Gilderdale  
Stouffville Free Press

The first time many voters in Ontario became aware of the referendum on proportional representation was in mid-September, when they received their registration cards for the Oct. 10 provincial election.

The referendum, which was included in Dalton McGuinty's election promises in 2003, asks Ontarians to choose between two electoral systems: the existing first-past-the-post (FPTP) system or mixed-member proportional (MMP). Under FPTP, each person casts a single vote for a candidate or party in his or her riding, and the party with the most votes wins.

Under MMP, people

would cast two votes: one for a local candidate, as in the current system; the other for a political party. Ridings would be reduced from the current 107 to 90, and an additional 39 MPPs would be selected from lists of candidates chosen by the parties. Any party with at least 3 per cent of the popular vote would be represented by MPPs from the 'list' seats.

The proposed system allows for a much more accurate reflection of the popular vote, and would give smaller parties like the Greens the opportunity for representation in the Legislature through 'list' seats. It would also prevent the election of majority governments with considerably less than half the popular vote.

However, the 39 'list' MPPs would be appointed, not elected, and minority governments and coalitions would become the norm. For more information on Referendum Ontario visit [YourBigDecision.ca](http://YourBigDecision.ca) or call 1-888-ONT-VOTE.

## Gallery seeks volunteers for youth initiative

By Cass Reimer

If you're interested in a youth arts initiative, The Latcham Gallery is looking for you.

We are recruiting volunteers for a youth arts advisory panel. The initial goal is to set up an after-school art program, something that will be really exciting and engaging for youth.

First of all, we need young people - art enthusiasts and/or young people with an interest in volunteering and leadership. Second, we need community members with ideas and experience in this kind of community initiative.

Cass Reimer is education program coordinator at The Latcham Gallery

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