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Thursday September 1, 2011

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# Medical Ghostwriting

They write on behalf of celebrities, politicians, public figures. But is there a point where ghostwriting crosses an ethical line? Critics say absolutely. And that line is when doctors or scientists agree to have their names on published papers, where the research and ghostwriting was paid for by drug companies.

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Today's guest host was [Piya Chattopadhyay](#).

## **Part One of The Current**

### **Satire**

It's Thursday, September 1st.

The Canadian economy shrank last quarter, for the first time since the recession in 2009.

Currently, economists say there is no need for panic ... since our hopes and dreams also shrank accordingly.

This is The Current.

### **Medical Ghostwriting - Simon Stern**

If you look at a scientific research paper, you probably assume that the person who signed their name to it is in fact the person who wrote it. But it turns out, that's not always the case. In some cases, the paper you're looking at was actually written by someone paid by a drug company ... a ghost-writer whose name is nowhere to be found on the final product.

Critics say this kind of medical ghost-writing taints the integrity of the results and that a medication's side-effects can end up being down-played or omitted altogether. It's not known how often this practice happens. But one study run by the [Journal of the American Medical Association](#) suggested that more than seven per cent of the articles in its own journal had unacknowledged contributions.

Now, two Canadian lawyers are proposing to fight back against the practice of medical ghost-writing by suing the authors for fraud. [Simon Stern](#) is one of the lawyers. He teaches in the Faculty of Law at The University of Toronto. He's also the co-author of the article [Legal Remedies for Medical Ghostwriting](#), which was published in the Public Library of Science. Simon Stern was in Toronto.

### **Medical Ghostwriting - Paul Hebert**

To find out how this practice of ghost writing is being tackled by the journals themselves, we were joined by [Dr. Paul Hebert](#). He is Editor-in-Chief of the [Canadian Medical Association Journal](#). He joined us from Ottawa.

### **Medical Ghostwriting - Linda Logdberg**

With all this talk of ghost writers you might be wondering who these people are and how they got these jobs. [Dr. Linda Logdberg](#) is a former ghost writer, who worked for several medical writing companies. Linda joined us from Atlanta, Georgia.

### **Related Links:**

- [Scientists credited on ghostwritten articles 'should be charged with fraud' By Ian Sample - The Guardian](#)
- [The murky world of academic ghost writing By Julie Belluz - Macleans](#)
- [The Ethical Conflicts of a Medical Writing Career By Elizabeth Pain - Science Magazine](#)

**Other segment from today's show:**

- [The Perfect Martini \(Documentary\)](#)
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The Current Review:

Weekdays at 8 p.m. (8:30 p.m. NT)

Shift:

Mondays at 9:30 a.m. & Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. (June 27 - August 31)

[Sirius 137](#) Weekdays at 8 a.m. ET

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CBC-The Current  
**TheCurrentCBC**

Olivia Chow is my first guest on The Current this morning. She's arrived on her bicycle.

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Tuesday: Don't miss our feature interview with NDP MP @oliviachow tomorrow at 8:37am on CBC Radio One. #ndp #jacklayton #oliviachow yesterday · reply · retweet · favorite

Mon podcasts: We revisit Arab Spring & catch up with previous guests. Plus a debate on school lunch box politics. <http://t.co/2xFJdyX> yesterday · reply · retweet · favorite

TUESDAY: NDP MP Olivia Chow talks about the extraordinary events surrounding Jack Layton's death and her plans for the future. 8:37am yesterday · reply · retweet · favorite



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