

# The doctor will see you now. Click here, please

**W**hat's the Greek word for chutzpah? In the basement of his Dollard-des-Ormeaux home, working with \$500,000 worth of leased electronics equipment, pediatrician Paul Roumeliotis hopes to build a multimedia empire.

**Ambitious? You bet.** "I'll be the Dr. Spock of the new millennium," he boasts, swiveling his chair around to monitor more incoming E-mail off a bank of monitors.

Roumeliotis, 42, calls himself "Dr. Paul" - the name his patients give him, because they can't pronounce the rest. It's also the name he goes by on the Web, where he maintains a site dispensing child health advice.

The eldest son of Greek immigrants, he was first in the family to get past high school. A burly, dynamic man who plays drums, he made a name for himself as a Montreal studio musician and rock-music producer. Led Zeppelin is his favourite band.

Then, paying his way with his earnings from the music business, he went to medical school - and re-invented himself.

He qualified as an MD in 1983, and for his speciality in pediatrics in 1987, and in 1990 founded the Montreal Children's Hospital asthma centre.

Around the same time, he trademarked his new identity: Dr. Paul. In his studio, under contract with pharmaceutical companies, he started producing videos, cassettes and CD-ROMs: on asth-

ma, ear infections, hyperactivity, bedwetting, bottle-feeding, you name it.

And he got interested in the Web. "In many ways, he's breaking new ground," said McGill University Health Centre planning director Dr. Nicholas Steinmetz, a family friend (his sons used to record with Roumeliotis).

"What he's doing is not totally new in North America, but we haven't had much in Canada, and nothing much in Montreal," said Steinmetz, a keen fan of multimedia in medicine.

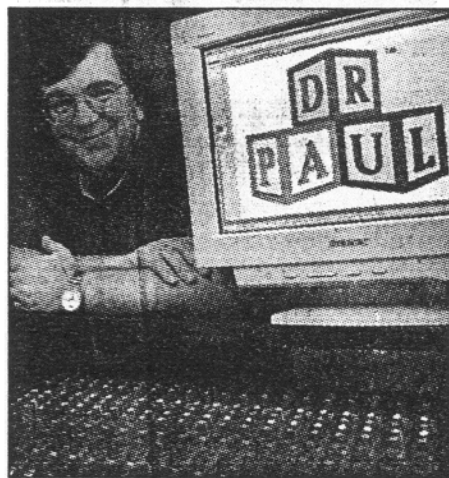
"And here's a guy who has some knowledge about medicine, because he's a doctor, and he's been interested in the use of the media, and he has a capacity to make things understandable to people."

It adds up to a real resource for patients - not just Montrealers, but people across the world, Steinmetz said. "I think what he's starting to do is going to be very helpful to the population."

Roumeliotis calls it his "vision" - to supply parents with all the information they need to live more serenely. "I'm a doctor, and I know what parents want to know," he said.

He's also a father. He and his wife, Diana, an ex-respiratory therapist, have two children: a 12-year-old daughter and 8-year-old son. They've appeared in his videos.

"You know what my philosophy is? Knowledge is comfort. It allows you to better enjoy your kids.



PETER MARTIN, GAZETTE

Dr. Paul Roumeliotis is one wired physician.

If you're worried, it's no fun."

As a pediatrician, he's trained to communicate. "Pediatrics is medicine by proxy," he said. "You're talking to the parent, not to the baby or the child. And inherent in that is the ability to communicate."

He practices at a local clinic once a week. The rest of the time he talks to the cyberworld. "My message gets to hundreds of thousands of patients now, instead of just us being one-on-one. And they love me."

From Tel Aviv to Corner Brook, he gets E-mail from everyone. He doesn't respond individually, but churns out daily tips and weekly Dr. Paul columns on his site, [www.drpaul.com](http://www.drpaul.com).

He doesn't do any online diagnosis. He doesn't believe in it, and besides, the malpractice-insurance premiums would be prohibitive. "What I do complements parents' medical education, not replace it."

Roumeliotis believes people these days are hungry for information.

"The health-care consumer has changed: people want to hear more about their disease. They want access to information. They're fed up with waiting in line. So they go online."

How big is his own potential market? Important enough to have seen Roumeliotis appointed last April as director of Multiformat Health Communications at McGill University's medical faculty.

Dr. Paul only sees busy days ahead. "A lot of physicians I know, people come to them with 30, 40 pages of printouts from Internet sites. It's a reflection of the zeal people have now. And me, I'm right in the middle of it."

Jeff Heinrich