



Thomas C. Meyer, MD

## Editorial

# Medical ethics: Education, practice and research

Thomas C. Meyer, MD, Medical Editor, Wisconsin Medical Journal

When it became apparent that there was going to be a paucity of voluntarily submitted articles relating to the theme of “Ethical Issues,” we contacted 3 respected medical ethicists in the region with the request that they write briefly on topics of current interest to each of them. The resulting papers are, we hope, of high interest to readers.

Doctor Derse outlines the evolution of the comprehensive teaching/learning program at the Medical College of Wisconsin with its recurrent emphasis throughout the 4 years (p 18). Would that 50 years ago our own school had offered a quarter of the content. Doctor Valaitis explores the thorny issues surrounding cultural diversity in the provision and receipt of medical care in this day and age—US-trained physicians dealing with patients belonging to cultures markedly different from ours, international medical graduates (IMGs) dealing with the expectations of US citizens, and IMGs dealing with immigrants from cultures very different from their own (p 12). Doctor Fost deftly summarizes and addresses the major issues dominating the stem cell controversy (p 16). We salute and thank all 3 authors.

In our peer-reviewed section, Doctors Rezkalla and Kloner review the physiology and clinical course of natural preconditioning of ischemic myocardium before outlining the studies in interventional preconditioning including pharmacological, pre- and post-angioplasty as well as pre- and post-surgery (bypass and transplantation). They conclude that

drug management currently offers the best hope of success and encourage us to follow the studies on preconditioning closely (p 22).

Representatives of the Wisconsin Pain Initiative, acknowledged national leaders of the effort to improve the management of pain of all types, report the findings of their inquiry into the perceptions, policies, and practices of a small group of Wisconsin Insurers and Managed Care Organizations in regard to effective pain management in their enrolled populations. The somewhat depressing results show that none of the participating organizations have effective mechanisms of coding and tracking any pain management plans. The plea is for improved communications between health care professionals and the managers of health care organizations with emphasis on the economics of caring for patients in pain (p 27). Hoxie et al report that the US Public Health Service recommendation that all pregnant women should undergo voluntary “opt in” HIV testing prior to delivery is being met in only 68% of deliveries in Wisconsin. This is based on a study of a random sample of the records of approximately 1000 women who delivered during 2003. Approximately 20 cases of perinatally transmitted HIV infants are reported annually from throughout the state. The discussion of the details and recommendations is revealing (p 32).

The good news (breast and colorectal cancer), bad news (cervical cancer, and melanoma) and worst news (lung cancer) concerning the progress in

prevention and treatment of cancer in Wisconsin between 1989 and 2000 are presented and discussed by Treml and her associates. They conclude that targeting cancer sites in appropriate age, gender, and behaviors of specific patients offers the most promising avenue of attaining further reductions in overall cancer mortality (p 38).

There follow 2 formal clinical case reports (retroperitoneal varices, p 44 and A-V fistula of the lower lip, p 47) with interesting discussions of the evolutions and managements of the conditions, and several case reports in the second half of the Proceedings of the 2004 Wisconsin Chapter of the ACP meetings (p 51) including myasthenia gravis, extra-intestinal involvement in inflammatory bowel disease, partial renal infarction, Wernicke’s encephalopathy, Henoch-Schonlein Purpura in a mature adult, drug-induced hypothermia, Boerhaave’s syndrome, propylthiouracil-induced cutaneous vasculitis and necrosis, thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura, rhabdomyolysis related to an energy supplement, pancreatitis presenting as arthritis and blastomycosis presenting as paraparesis.

Finally, this medical editor of the *Wisconsin Medical Journal* bids farewell to all our readers with thanks for all of your kind words as well as all the assistance I have had from the managing editors during my 11 year tenure—particularly Kendi Parvin and Rachel Berens-VanHeest. I look forward to significant future progress with John Frey, MD, a “real, hands-on doctor” and sophisticated author/editor who will take the helm this July.

# Wisconsin Medical Journal

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