

## Constitutional amendment sparks more debate

In the September issue of the *Wisconsin Medical Journal* are two editorials encouraging a “no” vote on the impending marriage amendment. The first article by Paul Wertsch, MD, starts by defining the problem as one of access to health care but then goes on to defend the homosexual lifestyle because it is claimed to be biological in origin. The second article by Paul Grossberg, MD, cites governmental data, medical political policy, and a lack of evidence of harm to children by homosexual parenting to likewise make the marriage amendment a health care access issue rather than a moral clarification. My major point is that the issue of defining marriage and the issue of health care access are two totally separate issues. They are only joined by an ineffective health care payment system, which needs to be addressed separately. To blend these issues together will only bring more confusion to both. My minor point is that both authors make assumptions and draw conclusions that are not as rigorously correct as they claim.

For example, in comparing homosexual *behavior* to the neutral physical attribute of eye color, Dr Wertsch mixes apples and oranges on two levels. First he implies that a physical attribute is the same as a psychological trait. Next, he goes a step further implying a compelling continuity between same-sex attraction (the psychological trait) and a homosexual lifestyle (a behavior).

While the tendency to be attracted to the same sex *may* not involve a choice, living a lifestyle including sexual relations with the same sex IS a choice. But behavioral choices have many influences. As in the case of alcoholism, biological genetics may be one of them, but it is not solely responsible for behavior.

In considering the suitability of sexual orientation in parenting, as Dr Grossberg does, one must ask: Is the evidence really so compelling? There are those who cite evidence to the contrary. The National Catholic Bioethics Center (NCBC) (*Ethics & Medicine*, July 2006, V31, #7) and The Catholic Medical Association, in their articles cite such evidence. NCBC addresses the issue of reasons for refusing to assist in same-sex adoptions while “Homosexuality and Hope,” ([www.cathmed.org/publications/homosexuality.htm](http://www.cathmed.org/publications/homosexuality.htm)) documents medical evidence and conclusions contrary to the implied, inherited, biological irreversibility. The fact that this information is cited in Catholic-identified sources should not make it so easily dismissed without reasonable investigation.

All people should be treated respectfully regardless of who they are or how they behave. However, there is a vast difference in making individual judgments and *issue* judgments. While practical health care access is a problem, it should be addressed separately from defining marriage as an issue. The outcome of the marriage amendment vote will NOT decide objective rightness. It will only decide in what direction we Wisconsin residents wish to move in defining who we *should* be. This is not a medical decision. It is a moral decision.

*Michael Robiolio, MD*  
*Darlington, Wis*

# Wisconsin Medical Journal

The mission of the *Wisconsin Medical Journal* is to provide a vehicle for professional communication and continuing education of Wisconsin physicians.

The *Wisconsin Medical Journal* (ISSN 1098-1861) is the official publication of the Wisconsin Medical Society and is devoted to the interests of the medical profession and health care in Wisconsin. The managing editor is responsible for overseeing the production, business operation and contents of the *Wisconsin Medical Journal*. The editorial board, chaired by the medical editor, solicits and peer reviews all scientific articles; it does not screen public health, socioeconomic or organizational articles. Although letters to the editor are reviewed by the medical editor, all signed expressions of opinion belong to the author(s) for which neither the *Wisconsin Medical Journal* nor the Society take responsibility. The *Wisconsin Medical Journal* is indexed in Index Medicus, Hospital Literature Index and Cambridge Scientific Abstracts.

For reprints of this article, contact the *Wisconsin Medical Journal* at 866.442.3800 or e-mail [wmj@wismed.org](mailto:wmj@wismed.org).

© 2006 Wisconsin Medical Society