

# Focusing on youth— and taking responsibility

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**W**ith the school year underway, our focus turns to the youth of our communities. This fall, President Obama's address to school children was met with controversy, but his message was simple: It is important to take responsibility to improve our future. In this issue of the *Wisconsin Medical Journal*, we focus on taking care of our future by looking at pediatric health care.

As a pediatric cardiologist, I have used antiarrhythmic medications to treat tachycardias in patients ranging from neonates to young adults. The majority of these medications are not approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in children. In spite of the great emphasis evidence-based medicine has received in the past decade, pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists continue to struggle with a lack of data when prescribing medications to their patients. Hsu and Brazelton demonstrate the prevalence of off-label use of medication in pediatric critical care patients (Off-Label Medication Use in an Academic Hospital Pediatric Critical Care Unit. *WMJ*. 2009;108[7]:343-348). They report that the most frequently used classes of medications in their retrospective study were analgesics, anesthetics, and anti-emetics. FDA-approved prescribing guidelines were available for less than 35% of the most commonly prescribed medications. This study points to a lack of available research funding in pediatric pharmacology and underscores

the need for responsible and safe medication guidelines for our young patients.

This issue also looks at the training of the health care professionals who will care for our children. Cohen and Nocton sought to determine if pediatric residents acquired different medical knowledge depending on the type of continuity clinic they attended

continue to be a leading cause of childhood death in the United States. This issue of the *Journal* includes 2 articles that deal with motor vehicle safety.

Brixy et al used a community-based approach to encourage appropriate child safety restraints in a low-income minority population (Free Child Passenger Restraints for Patients in an Urban

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during their training (Comparison of Medical Knowledge Between Pediatric Residents Who Attend Continuity Clinic at Different Sites. *WMJ*. 2009;108[7]:349-351). They used the resident-in-training examination to see if there was an objective difference in medical knowledge between residents who attended private practice continuity clinics and those who attended academic clinics. They found no significant differences on in-training examination scores between the 2 groups.

Beyond those providing health care, the community must also take responsibility for taking care of our children. Crossing guards are in place, and during the first weeks of school, our children are learning about traffic safety. However, motor vehicle accidents (MVA)

Pediatric Medical Home: Effects on Caregiver Behavior. *WMJ*. 2009;108[7]:352-358). Their prospective study involved providing oral and written instruction about child car safety restraints to parents and other caregivers. Their results demonstrated suboptimal—but improved—use of appropriate child safety seat restraints. Correct use was documented in 35% of children at the onset of the study and increased to 85% within 3 months of initial instruction. However, there was a gradual decline during the subsequent 6-month follow-up period to 67%, demonstrating a need for more effective programs to improve safety for these young children.

MVA related to alcohol consumption have been a major concern in Wisconsin. Tragically,

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our state's rates remain above the national average for traffic fatalities, with most occurring among teenage and younger adult drivers. Basesman's article (Alcohol-Related Motor Vehicle Accident Fatality: Wisconsin Rural-Urban Trends and Observations. *WMJ*. 2009;108[7]:359-364) shows that rural counties were at a significantly increased risk of MVA fatality in both alcohol- and non-alcohol-related accidents compared to urban counties. In addition, the rates of MVA, whether or not alcohol was involved, were higher in rural counties compared to urban counties in Wisconsin.

Pediatric health care spans infancy through adolescence. Teenage pregnancy continues to be a problem since it affects very young women as well as their infants, who face a higher risk of prematurity. Teen birth rates in Milwaukee (16.8%) have decreased over the

past 2 decades, but remain high compared to the state in general (8.6%) and the nation (10.2%), according to Mori et al (Setting a Goal to Reduce Teen Births in Milwaukee by 2015. *WMJ*. 2009;108[7]:365-369). They describe the personal costs to mothers, infants, and to the community when teenage pregnancy occurs. They performed an analysis on birth rate data trends from 1991-2006 to determine a reasonable goal for reduction in teen pregnancies among 15 to 17 year olds) in Milwaukee by 46% by the year 2015. The next steps will involve education and implementation of programs to help meet this goal.

This issue of the *Journal* also includes 2 case reports related to cardiac issues, with 1 specific to a neonate and the other about a geriatric patient. Long et al report an interesting case of a term infant with respiratory distress and isolated severe

right ventricular hypertrophy, presumably due to an infrequent occurrence of spontaneous closure of the ductus arteriosus in utero. Kinaliebe and Murdock (Suppression of Non-Sustained Ventricular Tachycardia with Ranolazine: A Case Report. *WMJ*. 2009;108[7]:373-376) present an unusual case of an elderly woman with non-ischemic ventricular ectopy and tachycardia who did not respond to beta-blocker therapy. Ranolazine, which is an anti-anginal agent, was used off-label and successfully suppressed her ventricular arrhythmias without complications.

As parents, community members, and health care professionals, we are fortunate to have the opportunity to work with the youth in our community. We should strive to be examples for them so that they understand the importance of taking responsibility to improve themselves and to become vibrant members of society.

# Wisconsin Medical Journal

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