

MJA TURNS 90**— NEWS OF DEATH GREATLY EXAGGERATED**

This nonagenarian is alive and kicking, pronounces current Editor Van Der Weyden (*page 3*) after examining the *MJA*'s progress over the years. His prognosis? A healthy future, if the current policy of “adding value” and being a forum for informed debate continues.

And, if image is king, then turn to Gaut's pictorial essay (*page 6*) for covers that have held court over the years (watch for the controversial covers of the '80s).

The Journal has also showcased powerful intellect and great discoveries, as Gregory's analysis of the *MJA*'s ten most-cited articles proves. Turn to *page 9* for the story behind those seminal reports on the effect of lithium on mania, “pyloric campylobacter” and peptic ulcer, as well as the fetal effects of rubella, among others.

On *page 26*, Thomas farewells a former Editor of the *MJA*. Ron Winton, a man of “wisdom and grace”, was Editor from 1957 to 1977.

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART...

...who have no conflicts of interest in research, writing, reviewing or editing. As for the rest of us — blessed too are the conflicted, who put their competing interests on record. According to Chew's editorial (*page 4*), conflict of interest isn't usually the problem people think it is.

SPORTING HISTORY

No homage to Australia's recent past would be complete without mentioning sport. Avoiding the rosy tint of many nostalgic recollections, Haylen calls it like it is in rugby union from 1970 to 2003: spinal injury rates were initially high, then dropped in Australia and the UK, but not in New Zealand or South Africa. Find out why on *page 48*.

MAKING HISTORY

Back in 1964, one in five Perth residents surveyed thought cancer was contagious. Have people's beliefs about cancer changed since then? Donovan and colleagues give a snapshot of what people thought in 2001 (*page 23*). Just as fascinating are Szego's reminiscences (*page 21*) of 40 years in the maelstrom of general practice.

Swinging from the '60s to the present, do you think surgeons should all use the title “Dr” and drop the traditional “Mr”? Whelan and Woo (*page 20*) observed which title urologists in NSW and Victoria prefer, with some noteworthy interstate differences.

**IN FUTURE...**

...we will embrace information technology, listen to our patients, fulfil the promise of genetics, change our research focus, or just *apply* what's already known. These are some of the thoughts of opinion leaders when we asked what should happen next in their respective specialties (*page 14*).

TO ERR IS HUMAN, TO REPORT IS...

In a recent survey published in the Journal, a community sample was overwhelmingly in favour of open reporting of medical error, no matter how trivial. In this issue, Taylor and colleagues (*page 31*) analyse complaints lodged by patients at Victorian hospitals. Kingston et al (*page 36*) asked focus groups of doctors and nurses how they felt about “incident” reporting. In response, Rosenthal (*page 27*) explains why closing the error loop is vital to improving patient safety.

WHISTLEBLOWING IN THE DARK

Campbelltown, Camden, Canberra and King Edward Memorial hospitals — all four have recently been investigated and found wanting in quality and safety, and all came to the notice of authorities through whistleblowers, who sometimes acted at great personal cost. There are lessons for us, say Faunce and Bolsin (whistleblowers in the UK Bristol case) (*page 44*), if we are to change the healthcare agenda and culture.

Britain has had its fair share of hospital scandal exposed by whistleblowers, the Bristol case being one of the most significant. Irvine (former President of the UK General Medical Council) describes reforms to the NHS since Bristol (*page 28*). This raises the provocative question “Will the need for whistleblowing ever pass away?”.

FIRE IN THE CAPITAL

After the smoke cleared from the Canberra bushfires of January 2003, it was time for those involved in dealing with the emergency to reflect on the scope and quality of their response. On *page 40*, Richardson and Kumar, from The Canberra Hospital, relive the busiest day in any Australian emergency department since Cyclone Tracy devastated Darwin in 1974.

LESSONS FROM LOSS

Early last year, English lawyer Sally Clark was released from prison, her conviction for murdering her two infant sons having been quashed by a court of appeal. Byard (*page 52*) writes that this case holds lessons for Australia as well as the UK relating to the quality of paediatric forensic pathology services and medical evidence tendered in court.

ANOTHER TIME... ANOTHER PLACE

Those who can, write. Those who cannot, edit. Those who cannot edit, set editorial policy.

Anonymous. In: Talbott JH. At the bedside. N Engl J Med 1967; 277: 109