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FEELING GOOD, DOING GOOD

At the start of the New Year, most of us will have some time to reflect. We may ask ourselves, what is good about our lives, what needs to change, and what opportunities might be pursued?

As doctors we might feel good that:

- We are consistently ranked highly by the community for honesty and integrity;
- Our goals for “goodness” are widely proclaimed in professional declarations that echo ancient Hippocratic ideals;
- We predominantly practise “good” medicine, following the standards of competence, communication and patient involvement, as outlined in the United Kingdom's General Medical Council's recently updated *Good medical practice*;^{*}
- Doctors continue to work in public hospitals, despite finding it financially unrewarding and professionally frustrating. Indeed, our Federal Minister for Health and Ageing recently questioned why doctors didn't opt to work exclusively in the private sector, asking “Why bulk-bill even pensioners and large families when it's possible to command a higher professional fee? Why endure the capricious management and cost-cutting of the public hospital system, when it's possible to work exclusively in better run private hospitals and charge what the market will bear?” And the reason? According to the Minister, practising medicine is more than just a job, it is a vocation, and public hospital work is part of the calling of medicine — “making a difference rather than making a fortune”. However, the goodwill in this calling is finite, and it will dissipate if the systemic strife in our public hospitals continues unabated.

At the beginning of 2007, despite the myriad political and professional problems that beset doctors, there still is an inherent sense of “feeling good” in being a doctor, and in facing another year of “doing good” and making a difference for patients, families and the public.



Martin B Van Der Weyden

^{*} http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/good_medical_practice/index.asp

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MJA BookClub Winners List Keeps On Growing

Congratulations to (L to R) Dr Nigel Roberts of Brisbane, Qld, Dr Ruth Blackham of Perth, WA, Dr Quazi Alam of Sydney, NSW, and Dr Robert Harris of the Central Coast, NSW, all of whom have won the MJA BookClub November prize of a paediatric cotton cuff sphygmomanometer set. Thanks to all the doctors, students and general health care professionals who purchased books from the November MJA BookClub and went into the draw. Pictured far right is Dr Martin Van Der Weyden, Editor of the MJA, drawing the winners. To see this month's MJA BookClub's great prize give-away, see page 94 and the inside back cover of this issue.

