

No obituary in “Death and Dying” issue

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TO THE EDITOR: A whole issue of the Journal devoted to Death and Dying [19 November 2001 issue] and not a single obituary!

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IN REPLY: I am reminded of a line from the American poet Edwin Arlington Robinson:

“I shall have more to say when I am dead.”

Nowadays, the opportunity to be the voice commemorating the life of a colleague through an obituary in the Journal seems to be of low priority for members of Australia’s medical profession. The decade 1991–2000 saw the lowest number of obituaries published by the Journal in the five decades since 1951.¹ We did not include an obituary in the “Death and Dying” issue because, fortunately or unfortunately, the obituary tray was empty.

1. Haneman B. On the writing and reading of obituaries. *Med J Aust* 2001; 174: 59-60. □

Books as carriers of disease

Sir Keith Jones

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TO THE EDITOR: With respect to the article by Ferson in the Christmas issue of the Journal,¹ a personal experience of an unwanted side effect which occurred in 1927 may be of interest.

I was a boarder at school, and four weeks before sitting for the Leaving Certificate examination I contracted a violent sore throat associated with a bodywide erythema similar to sunburn, but without any associated burning sensation. The doctor had no hesitation in diagnosing scarlet fever, and I was transferred to the Coast (now Prince Henry) Hospital, which was the infectious diseases hospital for leprosy, scarlet fever, diphtheria and the like.

I had asked if I could take my textbooks to the hospital, but was told that if I did they would be destroyed when I was discharged. I left the books at school, spent four weeks in isolation and returned to school with one weekend to prepare for the examinations — the results were quite disappointing!

1. Ferson MJ. Books as carriers of disease. *Med J Aust* 2001; 175: 663. □