



Deadly "doctor shopping"

pp 204, 211

Shifting childhood sickness

p 216

Seeking out SARS

p 220

EDITORIALS

"Doctor shoppers": at risk by any other name
Max Kamien 204

**The science of changing providers' behaviour:
the missing link in evidence-based practice**
Robert W Sanson-Fisher, Jeremy M Grimshaw,
Martin P Eccles 205

**Palliative care: promoting general practice
participation**
Geoffrey K Mitchell, Elizabeth J Reymond,
Barry P M McGrath 207

RESEARCH

**Seeking drugs or seeking help? Escalating
"doctor shopping" by young heroin users
before fatal overdose**
Raymond F Martyres, Danielle Clode, Jane M Burns 211

**Trends in childhood illness and treatment
in Australian general practice, 1971-2001**
Janice Charles, Ying Pan, Helena Britt 216

PUBLIC HEALTH

**Border screening for SARS in Australia:
what has been learnt?**
Gina Samaan, Mahomed Patel, Jenean Spencer,
Leslee Roberts 220

BITES AND STINGS

**Mouse spider bites (*Missulena* spp.)
and their medical importance**
Geoffrey K Isbister 225

MEDICINE AND THE COMMUNITY

**Statin prescribing in Australia: socioeconomic
and sex differences**
Nigel P Stocks, Philip Ryan, Heather McElroy, James Allan 229

SARS ALERT!

If you are **UNWELL**
and have been in a
COUNTRY THAT HAS
REPORTED SARS CASES,
please tell a Quarantine
or Customs Officer.



Quarantine Matters!



CLINICAL UPDATE

**Medical management of osteoarthritis of
the knee and hip joints**
Rebecca Grainger, Flavia M Cicuttini 232

CLINICAL ETHICS

**Legal and ethical implications of medically
enforced feeding of detained asylum seekers
on hunger strike**
Mary A Kenny, Derrick M Silove, Zachary Steel 237

MJA PRACTICE ESSENTIALS: ENDOCRINOLOGY

6: Thyroid nodules and thyroid cancer
Emily J Mackenzie, Robin H Mortimer 242

LETTERS (Contents overleaf) 250

SUPPLEMENT

Bone and joint disorders: prevention and control S1-S40

A RELIC OF THE PAST?

At the end of the 19th century, Osler reflected on the rise of specialism: "...the public ... has not been slow to recognize the advantage of a division of labor in the field of medicine. The desire for expert knowledge is... however, now so general that there is a grave danger ... [that] the family doctor should become... a relic of the past."

In the 21st century, as specialism rules and expands into ever-smaller areas of knowledge and expertise, is the profession even more at risk?

United Kingdom academic Ellen Annandale, in *The sociology of health and medicine*, argues that "non-physician providers can sometimes deliver a comparable service at lower cost. This is fostered by specialization which permits knowledge to be broken down into smaller tasks which can be undertaken by less skilled workers." And these workers' time has come! Task substitution is now touted as a cure for current healthcare woes. We have advanced nurse practitioners, nurse colonoscopists and mental health practitioners, and the list is growing.

At a recent health policy conference, a UK health leader extolled the virtues of a national cancer program involving non-physician "advanced health professionals" who manage treatment protocols and interpret radiological tests, including CT scans. When asked what the role of doctors was in the program, he replied: "Don't you worry about that! There will always be a *place* for doctors." When pressed to explain what precisely that *place* would be, he answered "diagnostician", "adviser" and "coordinator of care".

With task substitution on the health reform agenda, we need to ask: What do doctors do that others don't, or, indeed, can't?

The answers may well determine whether doctors as we now know them will become "a relic of the past".

Martin B Van Der Weyden

LETTERS

A child with <i>Salmonella enterica</i> serotype Paratyphi B infection acquired from a fish tank	
Sanjaya N Senanayake, Mark J Ferson, Susan J Botham, Roslyn T Belinfante	250
Inappropriate use of food quality standards for seafood-derived complementary medicines	
Lyndon E Llewellyn, Cedric E Robillot, Andrew P Negri	250
Intragam can interfere with blood glucose monitoring	
Shanthi Kannan, Christine H Rowland, Gregory I Hockings, Peta M Tauchmann, Edwin A Blackwell	251
Coronary heart disease risk prediction by general practitioners in Victoria	
Anna Peeters, Jason Ting, Mark R Nelson, John J McNeil	252
Prevalence of use of hip protectors in NSW residential aged-care facilities	
Keri Lockwood, Ian D Cameron, Susan E Kurrle	252
Evidence-based guidelines for fixing broken hips	
Timothy J McCulloch	254
Michael N Chilov, Ian D Cameron, Lynette M March	254
Public funding of large-scale clinical trials in Australia	
Alan Rodger	255
Otitis media and ventilating tubes	
Paul Walker	256

BOOK REVIEWS

De-stressing doctors. A self-management guide	
<i>Reviewed by</i> Simon M Willcock	228
Sports injuries and emergencies. A quick-response manual	
<i>Reviewed by</i> Peter A Fricker	228

IN THIS ISSUE . . . 202

CALL FOR MJA SUBMISSIONS 209

IN OTHER JOURNALS . . . 249

COVER: Photograph courtesy Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS)

Time is on your side

Follow our **Advice to authors** submitting manuscripts for a speedier journey to publication

www.mja.com.au

www.mja.com.au/public/information/instruc.html

Email mja@ampco.com.au • Phone 02 9562 6666

