

THIS YEAR'S RESOLUTION

It is that time of the year when the healthcare system picks up pace. Its practitioners have returned with renewed resolve, ready to confront the challenges ahead. But what are these challenges?

Ross Goldberg, writing on issues confronting US healthcare, includes:

- *Sorting out the Web*, for “the promising road of the health.net industry [has] turned into a street of broken dreams and drained cheque books.”
- *Participating in ethical debates*, for it is time to “articulate what we as an industry stand for” in the areas of stem cell research, cloning and the genome project.
- *The rise of complementary medicine*, for “clearly the public is sending the industry a message and . . . we need to respond.”
- *Cost of and access to care*, for how will “health care be provided amidst rising expectations and financial realities.”

- *Workforce shortages* of not only doctors and nurses, but most health professionals.
- *Patient safety*, as “one of the greatest challenges we face [is] reducing the number of medical errors.”
- *Consumerism*, as “consumers demand to play a larger role . . . in their health care decisions”, and finally
- *Restoring public trust*, “demonstrating . . . that we are committed to placing public purpose over private gain.”

Add the issues of Indigenous and rural health, and you would swear Goldberg was writing about Australia. Indeed, last year, many of these very issues were the subjects of yet another flurry of reviews and reports.

And herein lies the rub! The apparent inertia which inevitably follows the cycle of repeated and never-ending reports soon dissipates any resolve. Let this year's resolution be Tony Blair's words: “Enough of talking — it's now time to do.”

Martin B Van Der Weyden

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