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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**LETTERS**

FATAL ENVENOMATION BY JELLYFISH CAUSING IRUKANDJI SYNDROME

Paul M Bailey 139
Andrew H Dawson 139
Peter J Fenner, John C Hadok 139

CHEMICAL–BIOLOGICAL–RADIOLOGICAL (CBR) RESPONSE: A TEMPLATE FOR HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS

David A Bradt 140
Antony Nocera 141
Gim A Tan, Mark C B Fitzgerald 141

TRUSTING NUMBERS: UNCERTAINTY AND THE PATHOLOGY LABORATORY

T Paul Hutchinson 141
Graham H White 142

ETG COMPLETE

Ken J Harvey 142

ROSS RIVER VIRUS — ARE WE WASTING MONEY DOING TESTS?

Ian R Cheong 143

ITCHING BITES MAY LIMIT ROSS RIVER VIRUS INFECTION

Michael Sorokin 143
Peter A Ryan, Jillann F Farmer, Brian H Kay, Andreas Suhrbier 144

IMPROVING DOCTORS’ LETTERS

Alan Rodger 144

**BOOK REVIEWS**

TREATMENT OF SKIN DISEASE. COMPREHENSIVE THERAPEUTIC STRATEGIES, reviewed by Steven Kossard 126

HEPATITIS C. AN AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVE, reviewed by Katrina J Watson 126

**CORRECTION**

“Water and the environment: a natural resource or a limited luxury?” (Med J Aust 2002; 177: 609–613) 142

---

**IN THIS ISSUE . . .**

98

**TIME CAPSULE**

102

**IN OTHER JOURNALS . . .**

138

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