

THE TRAINING TSUNAMI

The NSW Medical Students Council has called on the federal government to cease the expansion of medical student places and to invest further in hospital training positions.* There is concern that the current system will not cope with the "training tsunami" expected to follow the recent policy earthquake that heralded an unprecedented surge in medical student numbers.

Reflecting their angst, the Council noted: "Within hospital environments, we are seeing the emergence of a sort of 'turf war', with students from the same and different universities ... competing to find patients". This territorial scuffle is not confined to medical students. There is increasing competition for access to clinical teaching and learning from other players: traditional nursing and allied health students, new flocks of international medical students and graduates, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners.

Australia is not alone in this. In the wake of mass demonstrations by students and consultants in London and Glasgow, protesting the direction of the Modernising Medical Careers system that had resulted in widespread disquiet over dwindling educational resources and opportunities, delegates at the 2008 British Medical Association annual conference narrowly voted to cap the numbers of medical schools and students in the United Kingdom.

While we are assured that working parties are preparing a considered response to our impending crisis, the casual observer may well feel these deliberations are trapped in bureaucratic power plays between federal and state jurisdictions. Above all, there is an enervating sense of non-urgency.

Ultimately, this training tsunami will have an impact not only on students, but also on doctors involved in pre-vocational and vocational training. At risk is the quality of future generations of doctors.

By all means, indulge in endless procrastinating committees and reports, but effecting systemic change can be slow. In the looming crisis, we need answers. And we need these soon.



Martin B Van Der Weyden

*Wallace N. Intern glut "risks patient care". *Sydney Morning Herald* 2008; 26 Aug: 2.

LETTERS

- Prevalence of trachoma in Aboriginal communities in the Katherine region of the Northern Territory in 2007**
409 Katrina Roper, Claude-Edouard C Michel, Paul M Kelly, Hugh R Taylor
- A heart-stopping orbital injury**
410 Vivek B Pandya, R Max Conway, Richard Conway
- Devastating outcome after only 6 hours of contact lens wear**
410 Vivek B Pandya, Alessandra Martins, Shanel Sharma
- Ocular syphilis: are we seeing all there is to see?**
411 Matthew T Kitson, Michelle K Yong, Jennifer F Hoy
- Wrist guards and wrist and elbow injury in snowboarders**
412 Graham M Slaney, Judith C Finn, Angus Cook, Philip Weinstein
- Two cases of *Streptococcus suis* endocarditis in Australian piggery workers**
413 Karina J Kennedy, Assad A Jadeer, Chong W Ong, Sanjaya N Senanayake, Peter J Collignon
- The Safer Patients Initiative: the UK experience of attempting to improve safe clinical care**
414 Peter J Shirley
- Changes to the University of Sydney medical curriculum**
414 Thomas KF Taylor
- 415 Ian R Gough
- 415 Kerry J Goulston, R Kim Oates
- KFC sponsorship of cricket**
415 Stephen Colagiuri, Ian D Caterson
- 416 Peter Young

BOOK REVIEWS

- 400 **Palliative care. A patient-centered approach** — reviewed by Paul A Glare
- 400 **Journeys with the black dog. Inspirational stories of bringing depression to heel** — reviewed by Kelsey L Hegarty
- 401 **Trachoma: a blinding scourge from the bronze age to the twenty-first century** reviewed by Jill E Keefe

OBITUARY

- Kenneth George Howsam**
401 John R Thomson

SNAPSHOT

- Severe bilateral papilloedema secondary to a large primary brain tumour**
413 Vivek B Pandya, Neil S Sharma, Peter Khong, John Males


CORRECTION

- 416 **Does practice make perfect? The effect of coaching and retesting on selection tests used for admission to an Australian medical school** (*Med J Aust* 2008; 189: 270-273)

354 IN THIS ISSUE

408 IN OTHER JOURNALS

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August MJA BookClub Winners

Congratulations to: Dr Phillip Feren, Vic; Dr Robyn Field, SA; and Dr E Maen, Qld, who each win a Triangular Desk Name Plate. Thanks to everyone who purchased books from the August *MJA BookClub* and went into the draw. Pictured right is Peter Hollo, AMPCo's Web Manager, drawing the August winners. To see this month's *MJA BookClub*'s great offers, see page 365 and the inside back cover of this issue.

