

THE LAND OF MILK AND HONEY

The Workplace Research Centre at the University of Sydney recently published a report on the working conditions of doctors and nurses in the New South Wales public hospital system. Commissioned by the Australian Medical Association (NSW), the Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation (NSW) and the NSW Nurses' Association, the 2008 report asserts that almost two-thirds of doctors and nurses in public hospitals had seriously considered abandoning the NSW public health system in the previous 12 months. Workplace discontent among doctors was highest among visiting medical officers (69.6%) and staff specialists and career medical officers (64.6%), followed by junior doctors (50.9%). Senior nurses and enrolled nurses had similar levels of discontent and disillusionment. It is more than likely that similar results would be found nationwide.

Symptomatic of this discontent are perceptions that managers of hospitals or services are untrustworthy, that consultation on matters affecting staff is either suboptimal or non-existent, and that bureaucratic expectations of staff far exceed the rewards for service.

This widespread malaise has many causes, including an appalling absence of both vision and leadership. Indeed, vision has been sadly subsumed by inquiry after inquiry, and leadership mired in a morbid reluctance to begin the reform journey. The situation in which medicine now finds itself is reminiscent of the 40 years that Moses and his people spent wandering the Sinai desert in search of the promised land of milk and honey. This begs the question: just how long must we continue our wandering?

It remains a mystery why doctors and nurses persist with a system that fails to value them, especially when working in this environment may also affect their own health. Given their obvious commitment to and love of their profession, why do they continue to wander in this workplace wilderness? Could it simply be that they are awaiting the arrival of a modern-day Moses?

Martin B Van Der Weyden

LETTERS

- Secondary prevention among cardiac patients not referred to cardiac rehabilitation**
161 Natalie A Johnson, Kerry J Inder, Amanda L Nagle, John H Wiggers
- Invasive management and late clinical outcomes in contemporary Australian management of acute coronary syndromes: observations from the ACACIA registry**
162 Leigh D Kinsman, Julie Redfern, Tom G Briffa
162 Derek P Chew, John V Amerena, Steve G Coverdale, Jamie M Rankin, Carolyn M Astley, Ashish Soman, David B Brieger
- Why we need a national registry in interventional cardiology**
162 Christopher M Reid, Andrew E Ajani, David Eccleston
- Very late stent thrombosis after discontinuation of clopidogrel therapy**
163 Myles M Conroy, Stephen N C Bolsin
163 Simon J Pattullo, Rohan Jayasinghe
- Decrease in breast cancer incidence following a rapid fall in use of hormone replacement therapy in Australia**
164 Graham G Giles, Richard Bell, Helen Farrugia, Vicky Thursfield
164 Karen Canfell, Emily Banks, Mark Clements, Yoon J Kang, Valerie Beral
- The changing face of the Australian population: growth in centenarians**
165 Heather Booth
- Invasive pneumococcal disease in Western Australia: emergence of serotype 19A**
166 Carolien M Giele, Keil D Anthony, Deborah Lehmann, Paul G Van Buynder
- Povidone-iodine (Betadine) solution: a simple protectant in surgical gloves**
167 George D S Turner
- Influence of television on demand for cosmetic surgery**
167 Darryl J Hodgkinson
- Treatment of type B insulin resistance with immunoglobulin: novel use of an old therapy**
168 Huy A Tran, Glenn E Reeves

BOOK REVIEWS

- 139 **Neuromuscular disorders** reviewed by Chris S Kneebone
139 **Mastering bipolar disorder. An insider's guide to managing mood swings and finding balance** reviewed by Michael Berk

106 IN THIS ISSUE

160 IN OTHER JOURNALS



November MJA BookClub Winners

Congratulations to: Dr Russell Gibbs from Vic and Dr M Michael Hoopman from SA, who each win a copy of *Shunned: discrimination against people with mental illness*. If you would like to purchase a copy of *Shunned*, visit the eMJA

BookShop <<http://shop.mja.com.au>>. Thanks to everyone who purchased books from the November MJA BookClub and went into the draw. Pictured right is Ann Gregory, Deputy Editor, drawing the November winners. To see this month's MJA BookClub's great offers, see page 145 and the inside back cover of this issue.

