

REAL REST AND RECREATION

More than a hundred years ago, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reflected on the importance of an “opportunity to escape from the turmoil of this commercial world”.* Doctors were not exempted from this need. However, “With the omnipresent mail and telegraph pursuing him, [the physician] begins to find it hard to secure a place for quiet recreation. Unless he can take an ocean voyage, the busy physician sometimes solves the problem by stealing away into the wild woods . . .”

Indeed, an ocean voyage had long been considered an ideal escape from the duties of care. While on board, the weary worker “could read no daily paper, hear of no startling crime or commercial upheaval, receive no urgent letter or telegram on business matters”, and the days passed in uninterrupted quietude.

But such peace of days past was being threatened. “We are told that while on her voyage many miles from land a ship received news by wireless telegraphy, a newspaper was printed and laid by the breakfast plates of the passengers . . . Thus by the advance of science the world becomes smaller and smaller until there will be no place left whither weary man may escape for rest.”

Now, a century later, society has a love affair with technology that bombards us daily with an array of instant news. Emails, voicemail, text messages, BlackBerry devices and iPhones have become social necessities, if not fashion accessories.

John Donne, the English poet, in his *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (1624), advanced that “No man is an Island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main”. With our society’s overwhelming uptake of information and communication technology, no more prophetic words were ever spoken. And the unforeseen downside? There is no place to escape for real rest and recreation!



Martin B Van Der Weyden

* JAMA 100 years ago: March 14, 1903. Science and rest [editorial]. *JAMA* 2003; 289: 1320.

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December MJA BookClub Winners

Congratulations to: Dr David Rowed, Roseville, NSW; Dr Alan Minns, Kalgoorlie, WA; and Dr Aniello Ianuzzi, Coonabarabran, NSW, who each win a set of 2 laminated dermatology charts.

If you would like to purchase one of the many charts available, visit the *eMJA* BookShop <<http://shop.mja.com.au>>. Thanks to everyone who purchased books from the December *MJA BookClub* and went into the draw. Pictured right is Greg Johnson, AMPCo's *eMJA* Bookshop Coordinator, drawing the December winners. To see this month's *MJA BookClub*'s great offers, see page 203 and the inside back cover of this issue.

