From the Editor’s Desk

HEALTH REFORM CYCLES

In the World Health Organization’s ranking of health services worldwide, Australia falls in the top 10%. Despite this accolade, there continues to be widespread dissatisfaction with the performance of both our primary and institutional health care. The traditional political response to this community disquiet has always been to initiate yet another inquiry and report.

The most recent of these was the report of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission. Like its predecessors, the Commission recommended substantial reforms, which, predictably, became the proverbial political football kicked about in the public arena as politicians and health commentators strove to score in true adversarial fashion.

Earlier this year, the Rudd federal government scored a goal when it announced an extensive program of health reform, as outlined in the document entitled A national health and hospitals network for Australia’s future. A sustained flurry of media commentaries followed, led by the usual experts and professional organisations. The Prime Minister frenetically crisscrossed the nation like a busy bee building a hive of support, after depositing billions upon billions of dollars into a flagging health system.

And all this climaxed at the meeting of federal and state leaders at the Council of Australian Governments. Here, the focus of the debate shifted to political gamesmanship and arguments about administrative structures, accountability and alignment between hospitals and primary care, as well as the protection of state revenue and budgets. But in the end, the lure of more dollars won the day.

This scenario reminded me of a gaggle of physicians in a bygone era, gathered around the bed of a febrile patient, arguing about how to treat the patient with an array of emetics, purgatives, blood-letting or colonic washings, totally oblivious to and ignorant of the underlying disease.

The promise of billions of dollars to treat symptoms of a failing health care system without fundamentally addressing the underlying disease with innovative and revolutionary reform will only inevitably lead to more inquiries and more reports.

Martin B Van Der Weyden

LETTERS

Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza, pregnancy and extracorporeal membrane oxygenation
668 Susan A Welch, Leone N Snowden, Hergen Buscher

Hydroxychloroquine retinopathy: screening needed to prevent blindness
668 Elvis Ojaimi, Robyn H Guymer, Tien Y Wong, C Alex Harper

Hydroxybut hepatotoxicity
669 Ken J Harvey

A lifetime pursuit of diabetes through chance
670 Wladyslaw W Smolilo

Defining disorders of the mind
670 Paul Z Zimmet

SNAPSHOT

Two in one: more than we bargained for
654 Jimmy Z Shen, Jui T Ho

OBITUARY

662 Konrad David Jamrozik, by Terry Slevin, Ezebuzisz Jamrozik

CORRECTIONS

655 Cost-effectiveness of volumetric alcohol taxation in Australia
(Med J Aust 2010; 192: 439-443)

655 It’s time to depolarise the unhelpful PSA-testing debate and put into practice lessons from the two major international screening trials
(Med J Aust 2010; 192: 393-396)

655 Final report of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission: will we get the health care governance reform we need?

655 Managing residual risk in patients receiving statin therapy
(Med J Aust 2010; 192: 366-367)

654 Two in one: more than we bargained for
654 Jimmy Z Shen, Jui T Ho

662 Konrad David Jamrozik, by Terry Slevin, Ezebuzisz Jamrozik

655 Cost-effectiveness of volumetric alcohol taxation in Australia
(Med J Aust 2010; 192: 439-443)

655 It’s time to depolarise the unhelpful PSA-testing debate and put into practice lessons from the two major international screening trials
(Med J Aust 2010; 192: 393-396)

655 Final report of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission: will we get the health care governance reform we need?

655 Managing residual risk in patients receiving statin therapy
(Med J Aust 2010; 192: 366-367)

626 IN THIS ISSUE

626 IN OTHER JOURNALS

MJA Rapid Online Publication: denotes an article fast tracked for online publication.

April MJA BookClub Winner

Congratulations to Dr Prue Stone, WA, who has won a copy of Perinatal and pediatric respiratory care 3rd ed. Thanks to everyone who purchased books from the April MJA BookClub. Pictured left is Zane Colling, AMPCo’s Administration Assistant, who drew April’s winner. For the latest and best from all medical publishers visit our secure online one-stop shop at: http://shop.mja.com.au.

To see our new listings and find out about our great offer this month, see page 664 and the inside back cover of this issue.