



MARCH is ETHICS AWARENESS MONTH!

All of the following are recent news headlines that have interesting ethical aspects. Please enjoy Week 1. The Clinical Ethics Center at Memorial Medical Center was established in 1995 in cooperation with the Department of Medical Humanities of Southern Illinois University School of Medicine. Located in the B145 area, the Center's staff are available for ethics consultations and are on-call after hours for emergencies. Please enjoy Week 1 and remember to visit the Advance Directive display in the Capital (E) Lobby March 24-31 to enter to win a basket filled with Ethical gifts.

Don't Drink the Water: Jasmine Roberts never expected her middle school science project to get so much attention, but the project produced some disturbing results: 70 percent of the time, the ice she collected from fast food restaurants tested dirtier than their toilet water. A health expert said that the ice is likely dirtier because machines aren't cleaned and people use unwashed hands to scoop ice. Toilet water is also surprisingly bacteria-free because it comes from sanitized city water supplies and toilets are regularly cleaned.

Clearing the Air: California has become the first US state to classify second-hand tobacco smoke as a toxic air pollutant. The decision by the California Air Resources Board puts drifting smoke in the same category as diesel exhaust, and could lead to tougher regulation. The agency said many scientific studies had linked passive smoking to a range of cancers and respiratory diseases. California pioneered smoking bans in the workplace, restaurants and bars.

Banning Death: Officials in the Brazilian town of Biritiba Mirim, 45 miles east of Sao Paulo, plan to prohibit residents from dying because the local cemetery has reached full capacity. The bill also calls on people to take care of their health in order to avoid death. "I haven't got a job, nor am I healthy. And now they say I can't die. That's ridiculous," said a local resident. Mayor Roberto Pereira says the bill is meant as a protest against federal regulations that bar new or expanded cemeteries in preservation areas.

Report Card: The Chicago Tribune reports a national advocacy group has slapped Illinois with an "F" rating for mental health services saying the state has failed to adequately help adults with major depression, bipolar illness, schizophrenia and other severe mental illnesses. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness report, too few hospital beds exist for patients in crisis in Illinois, community mental health agencies struggle with insufficient support and mounting needs for service, and the Division of Mental Health has difficulty handling consumer queries and disseminating information about existing services.

"Beetlejuice"... is more than just a movie name. Food makers regularly use crushed female cochineal beetles to dye food, particularly certain yogurts, juices and candy, says a Wall Street Journal report. While shocking, it's perfectly legal, the paper reports. Foodmakers don't have to list the bug-based ingredient, because beetles are part of nature. Only man-made dyes, like FD&C Red No. 40, have to be listed. But that may change soon. The Food and Drug Administration is being pressured to recommend that companies list beetle additives as "carmine" or "cochineal."

Take a Deep Breath: An inhaled form of insulin won federal approval in January, offering the first alternative to injections for millions of people with diabetes since the drug was introduced in the 1920's. The new inhaler could offer more convenience and less pain for many of the roughly five million Americans already using insulin, diabetes experts say. The Food and Drug Administration is recommending that patients have their lung function checked before starting the drug, called Exubera, and every 6 to 12 months afterward.

Pill-popping Curls: Researchers for L'Oreal in Paris claim they've gotten to the root of what causes curls. The answer, they say, lies below your scalp in the hair bulb — which is hook-shaped for curly hair and straight for straight hair. L'Oreal's scientists believe those bulbs could be altered using hormones, meaning popping a pill could turn curly hair straight and vice versa. Dermatologists say it could work. L'Oreal said its research could also lead to a pill that changes gray hair back to its original color.

CASE STUDY (discussion on reverse)

Based on a study in the journal *Lancet* that found a prisoner may still be semi-conscious during an execution (and thus suffer pain), a California judge ordered that two anesthesiologists be on hand during the execution of 46 year-old Michael Morales who was convicted of rape and murder in 1983. The anesthesiologists eventually refused, saying it violated their profession's ethical integrity to participate in an execution, even though their participation was meant to ensure the prisoner would not feel pain during an execution that is going to take place anyway. Should they participate?

\$4 Trillion: According to a new government analysis, health care will eat up one of every five dollars by 2015 and outpace the growth of wages, inflation and the U.S. economy as a whole. With aging baby boomers becoming eligible for coverage through Medicare, that means that by the end of the next decade, the government will be paying about half of the nation's medical costs. "We anticipate that society will again need to confront the underlying question about supply and demand for health care services," stated the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Service report.

Not Puppy Love: The Drug Enforcement Administration arrested 22 Colombian nationals who smuggled heroin into the United States by surgically implanting the drug into pure-bred puppies, officials said in February. At least three puppies died from having liquid heroin packets placed inside them and then being stitched back up, a DEA spokesman said. The group also hid drugs in human couriers, body creams, aerosol cans and along the lining of purses and luggage. Colombian police said they adopted three of the dogs, one of which was being trained to sniff for drugs.

Mother Knows Best: Officials in Massachusetts are debating whether to become the first state to prohibit hospitals from handing out free samples of infant formula, provided by formula companies, to new mothers. Backers of the ban say the formula gifts discourage new mothers from breast-feeding. Medical studies show breast-feeding lowers the risk and severity of ear infections, diarrhea and bacterial meningitis in babies, and may help protect against crib death, diabetes, obesity and asthma. Women who nurse may also have lower rates of breast and ovarian cancer.

Cheaper, Faster...Better? Europe's biggest drug maker GlaxoSmithKline Plc plans to make India a major center for testing experimental cancer drugs, a move highlighting the appeal of the country as a low-cost base for research. Drug companies are increasingly conducting trials in developing countries because it is significantly cheaper, it is easier to recruit patients since there is less competition from rival research groups, and the population is less likely to be taking other medicines which could interact with the drug being studied. Other favorite locations include China and Poland.

Burned-Out: Misery at work can make you mentally and physically ill, according to research involving more than a quarter of a million employees around the world. The article in *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* analyzed 475 studies and showed an overwhelmingly clear link between job dissatisfaction and burnout, lowered self-esteem, anxiety and depression. One of the chief authors of the study advised employers to praise workers more instead of only finding fault, to give them more control over their work, and to offer flexible working arrangements.

Always Low Prices: Wal-Mart said it will open about 50 in-store health clinics this year for shoppers and employees. Staffed by doctors who can treat non-emergency illnesses such as strep throat, costs will average between \$45 and \$50 per visit. Wal-Mart said many of the patients in an initial nine-store pilot were uninsured, and would have gone to a hospital emergency room to be treated. According to BlueCross BlueShield, the average emergency room visit is \$383. More than 40 million Americans have no insurance, and often turn to emergency rooms for care.

March for Opportunity: According to a report from the March of Dimes, nearly 8 million children are born with birth defects around the world every year and most of them either die or are disabled for life as a result. With proper medical care up to 70 percent of these defects could be prevented, or at least treated the report said.

Home-Cooking: In the seven months since Iowa passed a law restricting the sale of cold medicines used to make methamphetamine, seizures of homemade methamphetamine laboratories have dropped to just 20 a month from 120. Officials in Iowa and other states with similar restrictions are now worried about a new problem: the drop in home-cooked methamphetamine has been met by a new flood of crystal methamphetamine from Mexico. Sometimes called ice, crystal methamphetamine is far purer, and therefore even more highly addictive, than powdered home-cooked methamphetamine, a change that health officials say has led to greater risk of overdose.

CASE STUDY DISCUSSION:

On its face, what the doctors were asked to do might seem humane - ensure that Morales was adequately sedated before two painful drugs to end his life were injected. In fact, the judge ordered their participation after Morales' lawyer argued that the inmate would suffer cruel and unusual punishment if not sedated properly. The two anesthesiologists ultimately refused to participate after the judge declared they would have to intervene to assist in the death if the patient were to be in pain, and that the doctors would have to administer the drugs themselves. The anesthesiologists refused to actively contribute to the prisoner's death.

- Supporters argue it is unethical to use the tools of medicine, endowed with the trust of the public, for use in killing a healthy human being. The AMA and many other medical groups have long opposed doctors having any role in executions, including monitoring a prisoner's vital signs or giving technical advice.
- Opponents of the anesthesiologists' actions argue the ethics of physician participation draws directly from the ethics of execution. If society has already determined the execution is justifiable, then physicians have a duty to lend a hand if necessary, particularly if the execution is going to proceed anyway and the person may unduly suffer. Furthermore, the physicians have a state-protected monopoly (licensure) on the tools of the craft and they therefore have a duty to act when the state deems it is necessary to protect the welfare of the community.