



MARCH is ETHICS AWARENESS MONTH!

All of the following news stories are taken from recent headlines and have interesting ethical aspects.

Please enjoy Week 3.

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 Monday – Saturday and are on-call after hours for emergencies.

PacMan To The Rescue: Playing video games appears to help surgeons with skills that truly count: how well they operate using a precise technique. There was a strong correlation between video game skills and a surgeon's capabilities performing laparoscopic surgery in a study published in the February issue of *Archives of Surgery*. Laparoscopy and related surgeries involve manipulating instruments through a small incision or body opening where the surgeon's movements are guided by watching a television screen. "It was surprising that past commercial video game play was such a strong predictor of advanced surgical skills."

Disability On Demand: Creating made-to-order babies with genetic defects would seem to be an ethical minefield, but to some parents with disabilities like deafness or dwarfism, it just means making babies like them. A recent survey of U.S. clinics revealed three percent have provided the costly, complicated procedure to help families create children with a disability. The survey has prompted criticism over the definition of "normal" especially in the deaf and dwarf cultures where many people do not consider themselves disabled. The entire procedure can cost more than \$15,000 per try.

Chest Compressions — not mouth-to-mouth resuscitation — seem to be the key in helping someone recover from cardiac arrest, according to a recent study published in *The Lancet*. The study in Japan showed that people were more likely to recover without brain damage if rescuers focused on chest compressions rather than on rescue breaths, and some experts advised dropping the mouth-to-mouth part of CPR altogether. Stopping chest compressions to blow air into the lungs of someone who is unresponsive detracts from the more important task of keeping blood moving to provide oxygen and nourishment to the brain and heart.

Two By Two: The House approved by a 422-0 vote legislation that specifies that "paired" kidney donations don't violate laws against trading organs for compensation. Paired donations allow a patient with a willing but biologically incompatible donor - such as a friend or family member - to match up with a similarly incompatible pair so both patients can get transplants. Such pairings already happen occasionally. But because questions remained about their legality, some hospitals refused to participate and there is no formal matchmaking system to expand their use nationally.

Painful Choice: Deciding which medicine to give a child in pain just got easier: The first head-to-head study of three common painkillers found that ibuprofen works best, at least for kids with broken bones, bruises and sprains. Available generically and under the brand names Advil and Motrin, ibuprofen beat generic acetaminophen and codeine in an emergency room study of 300 children treated at a Canadian hospital. The study is published in the March edition of *Pediatrics*.

Protect and Serve: Thousands of food service workers in eateries across Los Angeles might be vaccinated for hepatitis A because of a series of outbreaks of the disease. LA County supervisors voted unanimously to look into the costs and benefits of requiring vaccination of more than 100,000 workers at 25,000 eateries, 300 catering companies and 270 wholesale producers. "We need to ensure that those who are involved in the handling of food are safe and healthy." The vaccinations cost about \$200 per person. Other cities already require the shot, including Las Vegas and St. Louis.

Inherited DNA: When Keivan Cohen, 20, was shot in 2002, at the urging of his parents a sample of his sperm was taken two hours after his death. An Israeli court has ruled that the dead soldier's family can use his sperm to impregnate a woman he never met. The court also ordered the registration of any children born as a result of the insemination as children of the deceased. Lawyers say soldiers increasingly have been leaving sperm samples, or explicit instructions on post-mortem extraction, before heading to battle.

Iron Will: A Tennessee woman who contracted polio 57 years ago and continues to rely on an iron lung to breathe, recently celebrated her 60th birthday, defying doctors' expectations that she could live so long and so fully. Dianne Odell is among only 30 to 40 people in the U.S. who depend on the devices. Like Odell, most of them were children when they contracted polio, a viral disease that deteriorated muscle function to the point that their bodies lacked the strength to inhale.

Lights Out: Environmental group Greenpeace asked India Wednesday to follow Australia and ban the common lightbulb to cut greenhouse gas emissions, fight climate change and conserve energy. Australia has announced plans to ban incandescent lightbulbs, a move that will cut its greenhouse gas emissions by four million tons by 2012, according to Greenpeace. Incandescent bulbs lose 90 percent of the energy that goes into them as heat while a compact fluorescent lamp uses about 20 percent of the electricity to produce the same amount of light.

Addiction? A man who was fired by IBM for visiting an adult chat room at work is suing the company for \$5 million, claiming he deserves treatment and sympathy rather than dismissal. The man says he visits chat rooms to treat traumatic stress incurred in 1969 when he saw his best friend killed during an Army patrol in Vietnam. In papers filed in federal court, he said the stress caused him to become "a sex addict, and with the development of the Internet, an Internet addict." He claimed protection under the American with Disabilities Act.

Ouch: Health care is expected to account for \$1 of every \$5 spent in the United States in another decade. That means a rise in out-of-pocket expenses, such as the copays for medicine, from about \$850 this year to about \$1,400 in 2016, a 5.3 percent annual increase. The cost of health insurance is projected to rise even more quickly during that same time — 6.4 percent annually. "America's per capita health spending is the highest in the world," said the secretary for Health and Human Services.

Can You Hear Me Now? An association of blind Americans has warned that cars with hybrid engines using electricity and fuel are dangerously too quiet for pedestrians. The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) said hybrid cars pose a risk to the blind, children, the elderly, cyclists and distracted pedestrians. NFB said it contacted Toyota, Honda and Ford in vain to ask that a noise or signal could be added to their hybrids. Nearly 4,900 pedestrians were killed in road accidents in the United States in 2005, according to the government figures.

Buzz Kill: A California Appeals court has ruled that although they had seen "uncontroverted evidence" that a terminally ill woman needed marijuana to survive, she could not escape federal prosecution even though the court "recognizes the use of marijuana for medical purposes is gaining traction." The woman says she uses marijuana on doctors' recommendation to treat an inoperable brain tumor and that the drug effectively keeps her alive by stimulating appetite and relieving pain in a way that prescription drugs do not. She said, "It's not every day in this country that someone's right to life is taken from them."

0.3% Use It: Backers of a proposal to allow terminally ill Californians to hasten their deaths pointed to a new report showing such laws are used sparingly. Forty-six Oregon residents, most of them cancer patients, used the law to end their lives in 2006. Since the Oregon law took effect in 1998, 292 of the roughly 86,000 likely eligible residents have used lethal prescriptions to end their lives. To be eligible, people must be Oregon residents, have a prognosis of less than six months to live and be deemed mentally capable of making medical decisions.

Cleaner Carts: Arkansas is poised to become the first state in the nation to officially encourage groceries to offer sanitary wipes to customers who use shopping carts. Both houses of the legislature have passed a bill called the Arkansas Health-Conscious Shopper Program. According to the text of the legislation, it is intended to "increase awareness of Arkansas shoppers, infants and young children about potential contamination from contact with a shopping cart handle." The bill encourages but does not require businesses to participate.

Mirror, Mirror...On the Mountain?: Officials in Bondo, Switzerland said they are considering the construction of a giant mirror to light up the mountain village with 198 residents who are deprived of sunlight for three months each year. The project would help illuminate parts of the town that lie so deep in the Bregaglia Valley they do not receive any sunlight between December and February. The mirror would be similar to a 26-by-16 feet sheet of reflective steel installed last year in Viganella, an Italian town close to the Swiss border. The Viganella mirror, which follows the sun's path using a remote computer, cost \$130,000.

Doomsday Vault: The final design for a vault that will house seeds from all known varieties of food crops has been unveiled by the Norwegian government. The Svalbard International Seed Vault will be built into a mountainside on a remote island near the North Pole. The vault aims to safeguard the world's agriculture from future catastrophes, such as nuclear war, asteroid strikes and climate change. The seed bank will cost \$5 million to build, will house three million seed samples, and is scheduled to open in 2008.

Always meant to complete your own Advance Directive? Now is the time! This year the Clinical Ethics Center and the Human Values and Ethics Committee are encouraging you to stop by the Garden Lobby on Thursday, March 29 from 7a.m. – 7 p.m. where assistance will be available to help you complete your Advance Directives. Every person who completes a directive, or brings evidence of an already completed directive, will be entered into a drawing to win a fantastic gift basket filled with environmentally and socially responsible products to try for yourself including coffee, candles, household products, lightbulbs and more.