



## MARCH is ETHICS AWARENESS MONTH!

*All of the following are recent news headlines that have interesting ethical aspects. Please enjoy Week 4. 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 4 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.*

**The Spectrum of Life:** When Kylie Hodgson of Nottingham, England gave birth to twin daughters by caesarean section, she was shocked that the twins were two different colors. Remeé was blonde, blue-eyed and fair skinned. Her sister Kian, born a minute later was black with brown eyes and dark, curly hair. Both Kylie and her partner are of mixed race. Skin colour is believed to be determined by up to seven different genes working together, and the chances of two mixed race parents having one black child and one white child are a million to one.

**Paid to Learn:** Across the country, schools have begun to offer cars, trips, iPods — even cash for perfect attendance. In Chicago public schools, students with perfect attendance for three months are eligible to win \$500 in groceries or \$1,000 for a rent or mortgage payment. The Chicago district says that for every 1 percent increase in its attendance rate, the district received \$18 million more in state money. Many schools are responding to incentives by the federal No Child Left Behind law, where money from state governments is often based on average daily attendance.

**Supersize Me:** McDonald's french fries just got fatter — by nutritional measurement. McDonalds revealed the level of potentially artery-clogging trans fat in a portion of large fries is eight grams, up from six grams, with total fat increasing to 30 grams from 25. McDonald's said it updated the nutrition info in January as soon as it discovered the new level of trans fat. It explained the increase by saying an improvement in the testing process has made results more accurate.

**Sad Anniversary:** 17 years after the Exxon Valdez supertanker grounded on a reef in Alaska's Prince William Sound, its environmental impact and the legal battle over compensation still haunt the area. Pockets of relatively fresh Exxon Valdez oil remain on shorelines as distant as 300 miles from the site where the supertanker disgorged 11 million gallons of crude oil in 1989. Only seven of 30 marine species, resources or services have recovered to pre-spill levels and heated debates continue about the spill getting into the food chain.

**In Your Hands:** Married women under extreme stress who reach out and hold their husbands' hands feel immediate relief, neuroscientists have found in one of the first studies of how human touch affects the neural response. The soothing effect of the touch could be seen in scans of areas deep in the brain that are involved in registering emotional and physical alarm. The women received significantly more relief from their husbands' touch than from a stranger's, and those in particularly close marriages were most deeply comforted by their husbands' hands, the study found.

**Best Friend:** Dogs can detect if someone has cancer just by sniffing the person's breath, a new study shows. Lung- and breast-cancer patients are known to exhale biochemical markers in their breath. "Cancer cells emit different metabolic waste products than normal cells," a cancer researcher said. "The differences between these metabolic products are so great that they can be detected by a dog's keen sense of smell, even in the early stages of disease." The results of the study showed that the dogs could detect breast cancer and lung cancer between 88 and 97 percent of the time.

**This Little Piggie...Glow in The Dark:** Scientists in Taiwan say they have bred three pigs that glow torch-light bright when a blue light is shined on them in the dark. The pigs were created by adding genetic material from jellyfish into a normal pig embryo. The scientists will use the transgenic pigs to study human disease. Because the pig's genetic material encodes a protein that fluoresces as green, it is easy to spot under a microscope.

**Violation:** The owner of a biomedical supply house was charged along with three other men in February with secretly dissecting corpses and selling the parts for use in transplants across the country. Prosecutors said the defendants obtained the bodies from a funeral parlor and forged death certificates and organ donor consent forms to make it look as if the bones, skin, tendons, heart valves and other tissue were legally removed. The body parts were sold to tissue suppliers and ultimately used in disk replacements, knee operations, dental implants and a variety of other surgical procedures performed by unsuspecting doctors across the United States and in Canada.

### **CASE STUDY (discussion on reverse)**

This week in the news is another case of patient "dumping" that was caught on tape and played on a variety of news programs. Carol Ann Reyes, 63, was loaded into a cab by Kaiser Permanente hospital staff and dumped on Skid Row, wearing nothing more than a hospital gown and socks, police said. "She was very disoriented. She didn't know where she was or what she was doing," said Regina Chambers, who works at the Union Rescue Mission.

**Credits Roll on Last MASH:** The US army has decommissioned its final Mobile Army Surgical Hospital, a unit made famous in the 1970 film MASH and a long-running TV series. The last MASH, a \$4.5 million, 84-bed facility, was handed over to the Pakistani military in Muzaffarabad to continue treating quake victims there. MASH units have been replaced by the CASH - a combat support hospital that is not as fixed as the MASH and can deploy small surgical squads.

**Not For Children:** The Los Angeles City Attorney has sued the publisher of the widely popular game "Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas," for failing to disclose the game's hidden pornographic content because most major retailers do not carry games rated "Adults Only 18+." Explicit sex scenes, known as "Hot Coffee," allow players to engage in virtual sex acts. The City Attorney said the company further deceived consumers by first claiming that hackers had modified the original version of the games, then announcing a week later that the sex scenes were written into the original game code.

**76 Years of Work:** A Los Angeles man who worked cleaning buses for the Metropolitan Transport Authority for 76 years has finally called it quits on his 100th birthday. Arthur Winston was only absent for one day during his working life - when his wife died in 1988. In 1996, Mr. Winston was honored by former US President Bill Clinton as "Employee of the Century". He has seen generations of co-workers come and go but said, "I just kept on going. I'd rather be moving, working or doing something than laying around the house."

**Blue Light (is) Special:** Researchers at Harvard Medical School recently compared the effects of blue light and green light on volunteers during the night. Subjects exposed to blue light rated themselves as less sleepy, had quicker reaction times and had fewer lapses in attention than those exposed to green light. They also had changes in their brain activity patterns that indicated a more alert state. Researchers say the findings, published in the journal *Sleep*, open up a new range of possibilities for using light to improve people's health.

**Treat One, Save More:** Researchers say they've shown that treating a mother's depression can help prevent depression and anxiety disorders in her child, a provocative finding with potentially big public health implications. The small study illustrates how important a parent's well-being is to a child. Depression runs in families and has a strong genetic component, but environmental factors can trigger it. The study results indicate that for children of depressed mothers, that trigger is sometimes their mothers' illness acting up. Effective treatment for mothers could mean their children might avoid the need for prescription antidepressants.

**Cuckoo for Coca:** Bolivia's foreign minister says coca leaves, the raw material for cocaine, are so nutritious they should be included on school breakfast menus. "Coca has more calcium than milk," he said. Bolivia's new president, a former coca farmer, has pledged to fight the drugs trade but at the same time protect the cultivation of coca. A Harvard study showed a small coca leaf contains 18.9 calories of protein, 45.8 mg of iron, 1540 mg of calcium and vitamins A, B1, B2, E and C, which is more than most nuts. Bolivia is the third largest producer of cocaine in South America.

**Convenient C-Sections a Cause?:** The average length of a pregnancy in the United States is getting shorter, with the most common duration now 39 weeks, rather than the full term 40 weeks, a new report in *Seminars in Perinatology* has found. In addition, the proportion of all preterm births in the United States has been rising steadily, from 9.4 percent of live births in 1981 to 12.3 percent in 2003, a 31 percent increase. Healthy People 2010, a federal health initiative, has established a target rate of no more than 7.6 percent because of the increased health risks.

**Less Charitable?** The percentage of physicians who provide free care to the poor has dropped over the past decade, signaling a growing problem for the uninsured, a survey suggests. About 75% of physicians provided charity care in the mid-1990s, compared with about 66% now, according to a study being released by the Center for Studying Health System Change. The numbers have declined across all major specialties. The highest rate of free care, 78.8 percent, comes from surgeons, perhaps because many of these doctors treat uninsured patients in emergency rooms.

**CASE STUDY DISCUSSION:** Officials say a number of hospitals, police agencies and jails in the Los Angeles area have been guilty of "dumping," in other words they take the homeless who are seeking treatment or crowding jail cells and release them on the streets of Skid Row. While the incident with Carol Ann Reyes may seem egregious, and Diana Bonta, vice president of public affairs for Kaiser Southern California has told The Associated Press the incident violated hospital policy and would not occur again, it is indicative of larger societal problems. Often the homeless arrive at the hospital with only the clothes on their backs and frequently these clothes need to be cut off to treat an emergency or discarded because they are infested with lice. It is often beyond the capacity of a hospital in the business of providing medical treatment to find adequate replacement clothing for everyone that needs it. Beyond that, there's a reason why Skid Row has been home to the down and out for more than 100 years. There are more services in that area than in the 13 Western states combined — so the homeless keep on coming. Hospitals simply cannot provide housing for everyone that needs it, so they try to arrange to discharge the patient to skid row where public support services are available. However, in this case they should have called ahead to ensure that someone knew the patient was coming and that there was a bed available for the homeless patient. **What do you think?** Should hospital rooms be more expensive to pay for clothing and rooms for the homeless? What are the limits of this type of care?