



## MARCH is ETHICS AWARENESS MONTH!

*All of the following news stories are taken from recent headlines and 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 Monday – Saturday and are on-call after hours for emergencies.*

**Can't Fool Me:** When you think of relaxation, chances are dental drills and Novocain needles don't come to mind, however spa dentistry is becoming increasingly common. At some spas, patients watch flat-screen TVs while the dentist is drilling, or receive 10-minute spa treatments including cooling eye masks and back massages by an on-staff massage therapist - all free with usual dental care. The Hills Dental Spa in Austin, Texas, even includes amenities like a tingly peppermint foot scrub, herbal teas and lavender aromatherapy candles to disguise that medicinal office smell.

**Creepy Crawly Zoo:** It appears that the skin, the largest organ in our body, is a kind of zoo and some of the inhabitants are quite novel. Researchers found evidence for 182 species of bacteria in skin samples from the forearms of six healthy subjects; three men and three women. Not only were the bacteria more diverse than previously estimated, but eight percent of them were unknown species said the study's lead author. The body has normal microbes native to the body, including the skin, and these populations change according to how we live.

**Better Recognized:** The largest U.S. study of autism has found that the condition is more common than previously understood. The new numbers show about 1 in 150 American children has autism. The numbers are based on the largest, most convincing study done so far in the United States, and trump previous estimates that placed the prevalence at 1 in 166. The study should fuel efforts to get the government to spend hundreds of millions of additional dollars for autism research and services. The results suggest 560,000 children and young adults have the condition.

**Heart Trick:** Several dozen babies around the world have received hearts that didn't match their blood type in an effort to increase their survival. The policy is counterintuitive. Implant a mismatched heart in an adult, and he or she will die rapidly. But babies' immune systems must learn to recognize and attack an organ of a different blood type, a process that's turning out to be more gradual than scientists long thought. The babies survive as well as babies given matching hearts, says Dr. Lori West, who pioneered incompatible transplants in Toronto in the late 1990s.

**I'm Rubber, You're Glue:** When classmates razzed a California girl about her Mormon upbringing saying, "Do you have 10 moms?" she shot back: "That's so gay." Those three words landed the high school freshman in the principal's office and resulted in a lawsuit that raises the question: When do playground insults cross the line into hate speech that must be stamped out? The girl said the phrase meant: "That's so stupid, that's so silly, that's so dumb." School officials say they took a strict stand after a gay student was beat up the year before.

**Paying the Price:** Respiratory ailments, mental trauma and other problems that arose after the Sept. 11 attacks are costing the U.S. health care system \$393 million per year, according to a recent analysis. Some of the people who worked amid the dust, smoke and ash at the site have died. Others have developed conditions including respiratory problems, anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, and the report noted the troubling prospect of later-emerging diseases including cancer and pulmonary fibrosis. Thousands more lawsuits are expected.

**Planning Ahead:** All 5,300 U.S. employees of Swiss drug-maker Roche Holding AG have been issued supplies of its flu drug Tamiflu to weather a possible influenza pandemic. The effort comes as experts almost universally agree that the world is ripe for a pandemic of some infectious disease. The H5N1 avian influenza virus, which has infected 277 people since 2003 and killed 168 of them, is considered the leading candidate to cause one. The U.S. government has urged employers to develop plans to cope with a possible pandemic.

**Office Making You Sick?** Your office desk harbors far more bacteria than your workplace restroom, and if you're a woman, chances are your workspace has more germs than your male co-workers'. Women have three to four times the number of bacteria in, on and around their desks, phones, computers, keyboards, drawers and personal items as men do, a study by professor Charles Gerba showed. Gerba says "women have more interactions with small children and keep food in their desks. The other problem is makeup." Gerba found the worst overall office germ offender is men's wallets.

**Church and State:** New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg defended the city's free condom program as a "real world" tactic to fight HIV and AIDS. Catholic leaders publicly chastised city officials for the program. They charged City Hall with failing to protect "the moral tone" of the community by encouraging "inappropriate sexual activity." The mayor said Catholic leaders can communicate what they feel is proper behavior to their followers, but the city is trying to find ways to reduce the rate of sexually transmitted diseases.

**A Parents' Job:** A federal judge in Texas delivered an important message in February about the responsibilities of websites and their users, ruling that MySpace.com should not be penalized for an alleged sexual assault involving a minor who met a man through the popular online service. Striking an appropriate balance, the decision doesn't give sites carte blanche to ignore the risks that minors face, yet it places the duty to protect minors squarely on the shoulders of their parents.

**Recipe For Tomorrow:** 18,000 children die every day because of hunger and malnutrition and 850 million people go to bed every night with empty stomachs, a "terrible indictment of the world in 2007," the head of the U.N. food agency said. "The little girl in Malawi who's fed, and goes to school: 50 percent less likely to be HIV-positive, 50 percent less likely to give birth to a low birth weight baby," he said in an interview. "... it's the most important, significant, humanitarian, political, or economic investment the world can make in its future."

**Egg Money:** The British government approved plans to allow women to donate eggs for stem cell and cloning research - and said they will also be entitled to compensation up to \$500 for costs incurred. The eggs would be used to create cloned embryos, with the hope of extracting stem cells. Because stem cells have the potential to become any cell in the body, scientists believe studying them could lead to cures for numerous diseases, including Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, or motor neuron diseases.

**Love Potion No.9:** A chemical in male sweat can boost mood, brain activity and sexual arousal in heterosexual women, according to a new study. The study offers the first direct evidence that humans secrete a scent that can affect the physiology of the opposite sex, said researchers at the University of California, Berkeley. Their findings were published in *The Journal of Neuroscience*. "There is much more going on than we think when we are smelling body odor," says the lead author of the study.

**Lifesaver:** In the Middle Ages, new mothers in Rome could abandon unwanted babies in a "foundling wheel" — a revolving wooden barrel lodged in a wall, often in a convent. Now a Rome hospital, the Casilino Polyclinic, has introduced a technologically advanced version equipped with a heated cradle and lifesaving instruments, including a respirator. It is possible for a woman to leave a baby without being seen, but the moment the child is abandoned an alarm goes off in the hospital's emergency room, ensuring that the baby receives immediate first aid.

**Heal First:** Circumcision may reduce men's chances of contracting HIV by up to 60 percent - but early results suggest the procedure may put women at increased risk of infection. The data announced at a U.N. consultation in Switzerland suggested that if HIV-positive men do not abstain from sex while healing from circumcision surgery, their female partners might have a higher chance of catching HIV from them. Experts said the study showed the importance of finding ways to protect women in the search for ways to fight AIDS.

**Can I Dunk That?** That cup of coffee just not getting it done anymore? How about a Buzz Donut or a Buzzed Bagel? That's what Doctor Robert Bohannon, a Durham, North Carolina, molecular scientist, has come up with. Bohannon says he's developed a way to add caffeine to baked goods, without the bitter taste of caffeine. Each piece of pastry is the equivalent of about two cups of coffee. While the product is not on the market yet, Bohannon has approached some heavyweight companies, including Krispy Kreme, Dunkin' Donuts and Starbucks about carrying it.

**Breast Health:** A dramatic and unprecedented 7% decline in the incidence of breast cancer in the United States in 2003 appears to have been the result of massive numbers of women discontinuing hormone replacement therapy just the year before. That translates into 14,000 fewer women being diagnosed with breast cancer in 2003. The impetus for the abrupt flight from hormone replacement therapy (HT) was the mid-2002 report from the Women's Health Initiative linking HT to a 24% increased relative risk of breast cancer and no cardioprotective effect.

**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.**