

From HHS

Panel calls for physician workforce commission

A national physicians' workforce commission should be established, recommends the Council on Graduate Medical Education (COGME). The COGME is an advisory panel to the Department of Health and Human Services. This commission would help to determine the number of residency positions for general practice physicians and specialist physicians, based on state and local needs.

According to the COGME report, a shortfall of general practice physicians is expected to hit the United States by the year 2000. Specifically, the report predicts a shortage of 35,000 general practice physicians and a 115,000 surplus of specialists.

Among specific recommendations outlined in the report are:

- establishing a quota whereby at least 50% of all medical school graduates are general physicians;
- having all payers fund graduate medical education via a pool;
- capping the number of funded first-year residency positions at the 1993 levels plus 10%;
- paying hospitals most affected by the loss of residency positions.

Researcher falsified breast cancer data

False data were submitted by a Canadian researcher as part of a study on breast cancer treatment, according to a federal investigation. A collaborative effort, the investigation involved the National Institutes of Health, the National Cancer Institute (NCI), the Office of Research Integrity, and the Food and Drug Administration.

The data in question were collected by Roger Poisson, MD, of St Luc's Hospital in Montreal. Dr Poisson was part of a research team who compared the efficacy of lumpectomy, mastectomy, and irradiation in the treatment of breast cancer. The researchers found lumpectomy to be as effective in treating stage I and II breast cancer as mastectomy. Their research was published in the March 30, 1989, issue of *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

The federal investigation came on the heels of an internal investigation by Bernard Fisher, MD, of the University of Pittsburgh. Dr Fisher was the lead investigator of the 1989 study. The review of the data found at least 115 falsifications. Among those improprieties were the inclusion of subjects who should have been ineligible based on medical, technical, or consensual grounds.

However, at press time, the NCI admitted that the federal investigation entailed an examination of the summary analysis of the data provided to the agency by the University of Pittsburgh. The actual studies themselves were not reanalyzed. Therefore, no conclusions can be made as to whether the study's initial findings still hold true once the false data are removed.

In February 1993, Acting Chief of the Office of Research Integrity Lyle W. Bivens, MD, recommended to Samuel Broder, MD, of the NCI, that Dr Fisher publish a reanalysis of the data—excluding Dr Poisson's data. Dr Bivens also contended that Dr Fisher and his colleagues should have responded sooner to the discovery of falsifications. Dr Fisher said that his research team responded appropri-

ately within established procedures.

Dr Fisher is expected to explain the circumstances surrounding this falsification in an upcoming Letter to the Editor in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, according to Editor-in-Chief Jerome P. Kassirer, MD. Likewise, the NCI has directed the University of Pittsburgh researchers to publish any revised findings in a future issue of *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

Children most affected by acute illness

The National Health Interview Survey, conducted by the US Department of Health and Human Services, found that children younger than 5 years of age had an average of 4 acute illnesses in 1992. Comparatively, adults older than 18 years had fewer than 2 such illnesses during that time.

Respiratory illnesses were the most common among preschool-aged children. Young persons aged 18 to 24 years had the most injuries that required medical attention or restricted their activities: 31 per 100 persons in that age group. Children younger than 18 years had a reported incidence of such injuries of 30 per 100 youngsters. Fractures and dislocations were the most common in young people aged 5 to 24 years.

One explanation for the greater reported incidence of acute illness among children than among adults is the greater likelihood that parents will seek medical attention for their children sooner than for themselves.

HIV guidebook for clinicians available

Designed to meet the needs of primary care physicians, the *Evaluation*

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tion and Management of Early HIV Infection is now available free of charge from the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research (AHCPR). Not intended to be a comprehensive guide, the book instead details selected issues commonly facing primary care physicians who treat patients infected with the human immunodeficiency virus. These areas include: disclosure counseling; evaluation and care of adults and adolescents; evaluation and care of infants and children; and coordination of care.

To obtain a copy of this guidebook, physicians may write to AHCPR HIV Guideline, CDC National AIDS Clearinghouse, PO Box 6003, Rockville, MD 20849-6003, or call (800) 342-AIDS. A companion booklet, *Quick Reference Guide for Clinicians Managing Early HIV Infection*, and two pamphlets for laypersons may also be obtained.

From NIH

Research using fetal tissue to begin

Thanks to the lifting of the ban on the experimental use of fetal tissue last year, research is now under way to determine if fetal tissue can restore dopamine levels in patients with advanced Parkinson's disease.

The study, funded by the National Institutes of Health, is being conducted by Curt Freed, MD, a neurobiologist with the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center in Denver. Researchers at the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City and North Shore University Hospital-Cornell University Medical College in Manhasset, NY,

are collaborating with Dr Freed.

The research protocol involves 40 patients who will be examined while on and off their medication therapy. During this period, subjects will be tested and videotaped. Fetal tissue will be implanted surgically in 20 patients, with the other 20 patients serving as control subjects. If results are promising among the treated patients, the control subjects will undergo the same surgery.

All subjects will undergo positron emission tomography (PET) before and after surgery to measure dopamine levels. Researchers hope that the postsurgical PET scans will determine the viability of the fetal tissue.

High expectations are also being touted for the use of fetal tissue in restoring insulin production in patients with diabetes.

The Revitalization Act of June 1993 is the legislation that lifted the ban previously in place under the Reagan and Bush administrations. The ban was enacted based on the reasoning that fetal tissue research would increase the number of elective abortions.

icine of the Pacific at Pomona was founded in 1977 and enrolled its first class in 1978 after the California State Supreme Court reversed the 1962 legislation on the grounds that it was unconstitutional.

Thank you for recognizing and publishing this important reminder of a dark period in the history of osteopathic medicine. ♦

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