

LETTER TO THE MJM

JOURNAL REVIEW OF THE MJM IN THE NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF MEDICINE

Editor's Note: The following is a journal review of the MJM published in the March 20, 1997 issue of the New England Journal of Medicine [NEJM 336(12): 885; 1997].

Whenever you might think that the world as you perceive it will soon disappear, always remember that the actual situation is better than you think. A reminder of that comforting principle recently crossed my desk in the form of the McGill Journal of Medicine (MJM), a student journal that made its debut in the spring of 1995. Jonathan Lim, a second-year medical student, was instrumental in founding the MJM and served as its first editor-in-chief. A new editor-in-chief takes over annually and is either a second- or third-year medical student. The rest of the editorial staff consists entirely of students, and students at McGill or elsewhere write most of the articles. The MJM has been widely circulated at no cost to medical schools in Canada, the United States, and other countries, a tactic that has elicited articles from students around the world.

A student-run MJM was launched at McGill in 1947 but ceased publication in 1951. This reincarnation is outstanding in many ways. The journal itself is a handsome, beautifully produced product, with glossy covers and high-grade paper stock. The advertisements do not interrupt the text, and the illustrations, many in color, are excellent. The original articles that have appeared thus far cover numerous aspects of medicine. Articles on Wilms' tumor, spondylolysis, a survey of health in southwestern Ethiopia, apoptosis in mammary cancer cells, and atrial pacing indicate the breadth of topics. There are good reviews (including contributions from faculty members at McGill), case reports, and miscellaneous commentaries, the last under the rubric "Crossroads." These articles, reviews, and commentaries are well written some would easily find a place in mainstream journals. The spring 1997 issue features a forum on tumor markers, with reviews of carcinoembryonic antigen and CA-125 by senior faculty members.

As far as I could determine, the MJM is the only regularly published and widely distributed student-run medical journal in the world. It even has its own home page on the World Wide Web (<http://www.medcor.mcgill.ca/MJM/home.html>). McGill's students deserve high praise for a thoroughly professional entry into the world of medical publishing. If they decide to take aim at 10 Shattuck Street, watch out, Dr. Kassirer!

Robert S. Schwartz, M.D.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF MEDICAL STUDENT'S ASSOCIATIONS

Dear readers of the *MJM*:

I am pleased to introduce to you the IFMSA (International Federation of Medical Students' Associations), and I would like to thank the Editors of the Journal for giving me the chance to do it. I hope this article will be the first step towards a continuous and fruitful mutual exchange of information in the future between our two

organizations.

IFMSA is a non-profit Non Governmental Organization (NGO) founded in 1951, and it is recognized by the World Health Organization as a forum for medical students for discussion and action on common issues within the UN system, such as the "Health for All" objective.

IFMSA exists to serve medical students all over the world through its member organizations at a national level, and to promote international co-operation in any field involving health.

The aims of the IFMSA are to be a forum for medical students throughout the world to discuss topics related to health, education and medicine, to formulate policies from such discussions and to carry out appropriate activities, to promote humanitarian ideals and medical ethics amongst medical students, to act as a mechanism for medical students' professional exchange and projects, to be a body through which co-operation and contacts with other international organizations are established and to act as a mechanism for member organizations to raise funds for projects recognized by IFMSA.

Currently, IFMSA has more than 55 members, which are National Medical Students' Associations, representing more than 600 000 medical students worldwide, and has an ongoing co-operation with other National Associations and Continental Federations, such as FAMSA (Federation of African Medical Students' Associations) and EMSA (European Medical Students Association). Furthermore, IFMSA has official relations with several senior associations, such as WHO, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA, WMA (World Medical Association), HAI (Health Action International) among others.

IFMSA has two general annual meetings. In August the General Assembly is held (this year in Cape Town, South Africa), with 250 to 350 participants, and in March the Exchange Officer Meeting (EOM) is held. All activities of IFMSA are linked to one of the six Standing Committees.

The Standing Committee on Professional Exchange (SCOPE) is the oldest and, at the moment, the largest program within IFMSA. Participation in this program gives students a unique educational opportunity that opens doors to medical colleges, hospitals and clinics throughout the world. Every year over 5 000 students participate in this program. Most exchanges are clinical clerkships lasting one month; however, preclinical exchanges and clerkships of longer duration are also possible. Students going on clerkship are offered room and board in addition to social and cultural programs. Clerkships are given in English and in the language of the hosting country.

The Standing Committee on Electives Exchange (SCOEE) offers intensive and highly personalized programs that are tailored to the student's special interest. A student choosing an elective is involved in a research project or in a clinical team for six weeks up to several months. Elective courses are generally given academic credit at the student's home university.

The Standing Committee on Public Health (SCOPH) includes several programs related to public health, both from educational and supporting points of view. Current projects, in which students from every country within the federation can participate, include the Ghana Village Concept Project II, the Sudan Village Project, the Zimbabwe Village Project, the Calcutta Project, the Ecuador Project, the Mexico Village Project, several projects in Brazil and the Orphanage Project in Romania. Some countries offer summer school programs on topics such as tropical medicine, primary health care and rational use of drugs.

The Standing Committee on Medical Education (SCOME) is a forum for discussions on different methods of teaching and learning medicine and the contents of medical curricula. Every year a medical students workshop on the future of medical education is held. Current projects are the medical education evaluation, Book Aid to supply eastern European medical libraries, electives in medical education, public health in

medical education, and a survey on postgraduate education. In its activities SCOME collaborates with several leading organizations in the field of medical education.

The Standing Committee on Refugees and Peace (SCORP) is concerned with the plight of people living in refugee camps around the world, with particular attention to their medical needs. Furthermore, SCORP works for the prevention of war, in collaboration with IPPNW (International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War). Among the activities organized by SCORP are workshops and congresses (the next one to be the first International Workshop on Human Rights and Medicine, to be held in Kampala, Uganda, 23rd August-1st September 1997), and projects in selected camps, where students work under the supervision of doctors, providing basic medical care, vaccination and psychological support. Currently, SCORP is involved in refugee projects in Uganda, Sudan and Burma.

The Standing Committee on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (SCOAS) aims to increase, through educational campaigns, the awareness of both medical students and the general population (e.g., school children) about problems concerning AIDS and STDs. In the last 3 years, SCOAS has been organizing international summer schools called "Stop AIDS." Recently, SCOAS has also been involved in discussions in the field of Reproductive and Adolescent Health. A workshop will be held in Capetown (South Africa), from 30th July- 3rd August, about "HIV/AIDS and Cultural Issues."

The publications of IFMSA encourage communication between medical students and contain updates on the work and activities going on in the federation. Among others, IFMSA publishes the Newsletter, for internal information (5 to 6 issues per year), an Annual Report, and the MSI (Medical Student International), a magazine dealing with relevant topics for the federation at the time of the printing.

For further information, please direct your inquiries to IFMSA General Secretariat, at the Institute for Social Medicine, University of Amsterdam, Academic Center, P.O. Box 1100, DD, Amsterdam (The Netherlands). You can also contact us by e-mail (eb@ifmsa.org, or info@ifmsa.org), as well as by visiting our homepage (<http://www.ifmsa.org>).

My best greetings to the readers of the *MJM*,

[Luisa Brumana, M.D.](#),

IFMSA President 1996-97

BIOGRAPHY

Luisa Brumana, M.D., graduated from the Università Statale di Milano (Milano, Italy) in 1996. She is currently completing her thesis work in Neurology. She served as the IFMSA liaison officer for UNICEF (1995-96) before being elected as IFMSA president at the 1996 General Assembly in Prague. Her term expires August 1997 following the General Assembly in Cape Town, South Africa.

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