

Introduction

What is nice about the concept and scope of the *International Journal of Risk & Safety in Medicine*, certainly for its editors, is that it attracts manuscripts dealing with such a wide spectrum of subjects, which are at the same time focussed on one key issue – patient safety. This diversity makes it a pleasure to write some introductory remarks for a new issue of the Journal.

However, after having said this we should acknowledge that concerns about drug safety are getting progressively more space in the journal, and that is no coincidence. The suffering and costs of the epidemic of drug induced morbidity and mortality, which we are currently facing in the Western world, warrant extra attention. A considerable proportion of our hospital beds are occupied by patients with complaints associated with or caused by the use of medicines and it is also estimated that we have to spend some 10% of our health budgets because of adverse drug events. So, no wonder that 2/3 of the manuscripts in this issue are directly or indirectly related to drugs and no wonder that we believe that to devote space in the honour of one of the godfathers, if not *the* godfather of drug safety research, Leopold Meyler, is well timed.

Another asset of the Journal is that it is International, and not only in name. This current issue of the Journal contains articles from the UK, the USA, India, Malta and Israel. Maybe this is a good time to emphasize that we do have an interest in high quality papers from emerging countries.

The first paper, by C. Medawar and A. Herxheimer, is a follow-up to their article in the last issue. The present comparison of professionals' reports and patients' reports of suspected adverse drug reactions leads the authors to some challenging conclusions about the Yellow Card scheme in the UK and thereby about spontaneous reporting systems in general.

The article by Gogtay et al., from the group of Professor Kshirsagar in Mumbai, presents in a very stimulating way a developing country's perspective of ADR monitoring and the special problems for Pharmacovigilance caused by, among others, abundant OTC medication and the wide-spread use of non-allopathic medicines.

Peter Breggin from the US draws our attention to safety issues related to the use of SSRIs and discusses some important forensic implications of the unusual side effects of this group of antidepressants.

In this issue we have two contributions that deal with pregnancy and childbirth. The paper by Sharan et al. describes the sociodemographics of unmarried mothers at delivery in a maternity hospital in Israel and points out the risks these young women are exposed to. If history is ignored it will repeat itself. It is therefore of interest that Savona-Ventura tells us about the history of puerperal sepsis under the special circumstances of the Maltese Islands.

A worthy finale for this issue of the *International Journal of Risk & Safety in Medicine* is the "Personalities" piece on Leopold Meyler.

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