6. Walco GA, Burns JP, Cassidy RC. The ethics of

[The authors respond:]

Conrad Fernandez and Gerri Frager’s claim that it is wrong to expose patients to “unnecessary procedural pain” would be correct if in the practice of emergency pediatrics children routinely received EMLA®, Ametop® or similar products. In reality, most venipunctures in Canadian pediatric emergency departments are performed without any local anesthetics. In initiating this study, the question that our research ethics board and ourselves had to ask was “What is the routine, standard practice in our emergency department”? In our hospital, children did not routinely receive topical anesthesia. The reason was that it was believed to interfere with cannulation success. Since previous studies had not addressed this question, a placebo-controlled trial was necessary to disprove this belief.

Anna Taddio
Gideon Koren
The Hospital for Sick Children
Toronto, Ont.

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[The author responds:]

I agree that MRI and other diagnostic procedures are not well-suited to the priority criteria approach. However, I don’t agree that “the only practical and ethical way to address MRI wait lists is to provide adequate capacity for demand.” Demand bears no necessary relationship to need or benefit, and convincing evidence that MRIs lead to improved health outcomes (e.g., longer life, less pain) should be provided before MRI supplies are increased. Unfortunately, the radiology research community has been slow to produce (or even to seek) such evidence. Indeed, we were unable to find any relevant studies in the MRI literature during the initial portion of the Western Canada Waiting List Project. This was some years ago, but I am not aware that the situation has changed much in the interim.

David Hadorn
Former Manager, New Zealand Priority Criteria Project
Former Research Director of the Western Canada Waiting List Project
Richmond, Calif.

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Corrections

The DOI attached to a recent letter¹ should have been DOI:10.1503/cmaj.1050983.

REFERENCE

  DOI:10.1503/cmaj.050682

In a recent research paper,² the answers to the individual scale items on the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale in Appendix 1 were omitted. The correct appendix is included here (see page 208).

REFERENCE

  DOI:10.1503/cmaj.050683