

Briefly

Pay per view: Free online access to the United States National Institutes of Health-funded research findings is on the chopping block as a result of legislation reintroduced in Congress on Feb. 3 prohibiting any federal agency from “asserting any rights in material developed under any funding agreement that restrain or limit the acquisition or exercise of copyright rights in an extrinsic work.” Michigan Democratic Congressman John Conyers Jr.’s Fair Copyright in Research Works Act (<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c111:H.R.801>) would, de facto, prevent NIH from mandating, as it now does, that the findings of federally-funded, peer-reviewed research be submitted to PubMed Central within a year of publication. The academic publishing industry has long lobbied against such public access. It’s projected that the public would have to pay as much as US\$30 to see a scientific paper if Conyers’ bill passes.

Industry symposia: The American Psychiatric Association has voted to phase out industry-sponsored educational sessions, advertising and meals at its annual conferences. As many as 50 sessions per conference have often been sponsored to the tune of US\$60 000 each, so the cost to association coffers will top US\$1 million annually, but the board of trustees felt it was the right thing to do, says President Dr. Nada Stotland. “This has been something that many of our members have been concerned about for a long time.” The move will necessitate reductions in programs and staff at the association, while educational sessions will be significantly reduced at future conferences. But Stotland says those conducted will be “blockbuster” reviews.

Sever ties: Professional medical associations should severely limit pharmaceutical industry financial support for continuing medical education, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* urges in an article coauthored by editor Dr. Catherine DeAngelis, (*JAMA* 2009;301[13]:1367-72). Industry contributions should be con-

strained to 25% of operating budgets, and all funds from industry should be pooled and administered through a central body. The calls mirror an earlier one from *CMAJ*, which urged the creation of an Institute for Continuing Health Education (*CMAJ* 2008;178 [7]:805-6).

Mobility: The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario and the Collège des médecins du Québec have reached an agreement that will ease physician mobility between the 2 provinces, provided the doctors “hold a regular permit to practise without limitations, conditions or restrictions.” There are, however, conditions that doctors still must meet, including providing proof of liability insurance and demonstrating that they “meet any language requirements” in the jurisdiction in which they hope to work (www.cpso.on.ca).

Geriatrics: The Canadian Association of Retired Persons has established a

scholarship fund to help students train to become geriatric nurses and doctors. The association aims to provide a 1-year scholarship for as many as 12 individuals, beginning in the fall of 2010. “We wanted to do something inter-generational to raise awareness around the gross shortage of geriatricians,” says Ross Mayot, vice-president of community development. The fund will be endowed through association membership fees. — Krista Seggewiss, Ottawa, Ont.

The legal take: The United Kingdom’s National Health Service shelled out roughly £134 million for legal costs in 2007/08, as compared with the roughly £264 million in damage payments that it made during the year to resolve 6212 criminal negligence claims arising from incidents after Apr. 1, 1995 (www.nhs.uk). Of 242 NHS trusts, 69 paid out more in legal costs than in compensation. — Wayne Kondro, *CMAJ*

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Oversight: The regulatory faults within the United States food chain became painfully apparent during the recent contaminated peanut paste outbreak. — Patricia Sue Guthrie, Seattle, Washington, USA

Roving: Mobile hospitals are among measures being adopted by state governments in India in response to a staggering shortage of doctors and other health workers — Natalie Alcoba, Yarragandlapalli, India



Natalie Alcoba



Reuters / Mike Hutchings

Tuberculosis: The World Health Organization says that without measures to contain new drug-resistant strains of tuberculosis, the disease will soon spiral out of control. — Ann Silversides, *CMAJ*

Dispatch: A Kingston, Ontario, physician reflects on casualties as he returns from a stint in Afghanistan. — Jorge Enrique Zamora MD, Khandahar, Afghanistan

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