

OSLER'S LIST

Biomedical science has transformed modern medicine. Significantly, it has also transformed the nature of the patient-doctor relationship.

Science has shifted the focus from the individual with an illness to the disorders of organs, cells and altered genes; from knowing the person to knowing the disease; from experience-based to evidence-based practice.

The current dominance of science has reawakened a corresponding interest in the value of poems, stories and essays. As observed by United States physician and ethicist Howard Brody, "Stories are essential as a means of perceiving how scientific knowledge in its generality can be applied to individuals in all their particularity". The exploration of literature is now a growth area in some medical schools.

But the value of literature in medicine is not new. More than 100 years ago, in a postscript entitled *Bed-side library for medical students*, William Osler observed that a "liberal education may be had at a very slight cost of time and money", and exhorted students to "read for half an hour before going to sleep".

Osler listed 10 books of which he wrote "you may make close friends...Studied carefully...these will help in the inner education of which I speak". These books were the Old and New Testament, Shakespeare, Montaigne, Plutarch's *Lives*, Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, *Religio Medici*, *Don Quixote*, Emerson and Oliver Wendell-Holmes Jr's Breakfast-Table Series.

With both religion and classical languages in decline, what would Osler's list be today? My own would include Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Solzhenitsyn's *Cancer ward*, Crichton's *Five patients*, Albom's *Tuesdays with Morrie*, Frankl's *Man's search for meaning*, Konner's *The trouble with medicine*, Watson's *The double helix*, Friedman and Friedland's *Medicine's 10 greatest discoveries*, Groopman's *Second opinions* and Williams' *The doctor stories*.

And what might your best 10 include?

Martin B Van Der Weyden

LETTERS

Sharp v Port Kembla RSL Club: establishing causation of laryngeal cancer by environmental tobacco smoke	
Allan O Langlands, Val J Gebiski	448
Bernard W Stewart, Peter C B Semmler	448
Gonorrhoea screening in general practice: perceived barriers and strategies to improve screening rates	
Graeme H Johnson, Donna B Mak	448
Separating politics and scientific research on heroin prescription	
Alex D Wodak, Alison J Ritter, Charles R R Watson	449
Wayne D Hall, Richard P Mattick, Jo Kimber	450
Assessing children's fitness for scuba diving	
Robyn M Walker	450
Death in Antarctica	
Eve R Merfield	450
Chris H Curry	451
Paul G Lamberth	451
Books as carriers of disease	
John V Roche	451

OBITUARY

Henry Oliver Lancaster	
by Eugene Seneta	439

BOOK REVIEW

Ward ethics. Dilemmas for medical students and doctors in training.	
reviewed by Sidney Bloch	446

IN THIS ISSUE . . .	408
----------------------------	-----

IN OTHER JOURNALS . . .	447
--------------------------------	-----

COVER: Photograph courtesy Daniel Fatovich, Emergency Department, Royal Perth Hospital, WA.

20 Common Problems: Geriatrics

An examination of common issues in caring for older patients

From managing chronic illnesses to genitourinary problems to aches and pains to neuropsychiatric problems, *20 common problems* provides guidance and answers for knowledgeable care.

Featuring

- Evidence-based protocols
- Analyses of therapies and diagnostics
- Quick reference charts and tables of presenting symptoms, treatments and drug dosage

Only \$99.95*

plus postage & handling

"Practical 'hands-on' advice that translates from the bookshelf directly to the consultation" GIDEON CAPLAN

For further information, contact the Book Sales Coordinator at
AMPCo: Ph (02) 9562 6666 • Email sales@ampco.com.au

* Price includes GST; AMA members receive a 10% discount.

