



// MISSED THE LAST ISSUE?

All stories from *Proto*, Fall 2006, are available at protomag.com.

A Dangerous Distraction

In contrast to the surgeons quoted in your fall issue about the types of music they prefer while suturing or “when things are going badly” (“Music in the OR”), I consider music in the operating room a hazard. As an anesthesiologist, I depend on my ears to detect subtle problems relating to the ventilator and monitors to which an anesthetized patient is hooked up. And loud music is also a dangerous distraction during sponge counts and at other times when strict attention to detail is absolutely vital. Unfortunately, surgeons are frequently insensitive to these issues, and, regrettably, the younger generation has even lost the finer features of aural diagnostic discrimination.

The soft playing of music during long surgical cases may be harmless, but its indiscriminate use is a form of hostility and harassment.

Hans Hasche-Kluender // Swedish Medical Center, Seattle

Credit Where It's Due

Readers may be interested to know that Andrew Schally, winner of a Nobel Prize for co-discovering the hormone that controls sexual development (“To Grow Hairy,” Fall 2006), did some of his research at the New Orleans Veterans Administration Medical Center and that the research was funded by the VA. What’s more, Rosalyn Yalow, with whom Schally shared the prize, did all of her work and received her funding from the Bronx VA. Schally and Yalow have provided outstanding examples of research in VA hospitals throughout the United States, and it is unfortunate that this aspect of VA service is frequently unrecognized.

Jeremiah Silbert // VA senior medical investigator, emeritus, Bedford VA Medical Center; professor of medicine, Harvard Medical School; Brigham and Women’s Hospital Division of Rheumatology/Immunology/Allergy

Keep It Simple, Stupid

Regarding the roundup of new devices for the detection and prevention of disease (“New Tech for the Developing World,” Fall 2006): While I recognize the enormous potential of a Particle Mediated Epidermal Delivery “gene gun” for vaccine delivery and a new eye swab test for use in the fight against trachoma, the unfortunate truth is that decades later we haven’t yet optimized delivery and use of a low-tech solution: oral rehydration salts to combat infant and childhood killer diarrheas in many developing countries. High-tech or low-tech, a major public health concern is that a solution can be widely delivered.

Ramona Lunt // International public health consultant, Boston

Advertising and Addiction

If it were not so sad, I would laugh.

In *Proto*’s fall issue, there is a full-page advertisement for wine (ten pages away from a story on the chemistry of addiction, no less). I loathe that a medical magazine has joined the promotion machine for alcohol. I see alcohol as a great evil and as a destructive influence upon families, careers, personalities and society, and I think it has a huge mortal and morbid effect on our very fabric.

Please find other sources of advertising revenue that do not shame your intelligence.

Mike Nielson // Provo, Utah

→ HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

Proto welcomes reader comments, which may be sent to protoeditor@mg.harvard.edu. Forward subscription changes to proto@mg.harvard.edu.