Second Opinions

Encouraging signs

I applaud the incredible improvements I saw in the March AAP News. Just last month I wrote to the Academy, stating that I will not join the AAP until it abandons its rigid liberal stances on issues that are in direct contradiction to many American pediatricians’ views. Multiple articles in your newspaper were cited as being very slanted to the left.

I must say, however, that the March issue was a great step in the direction of the views held by those you represent. I specifically felt the article, “Federal medical liability reform passage unlikely,” was very well-written and true to the facts.

But the article that personally impacted me most was the Commentary, “Religious faith provides strength to confront death,” by David Helfling, M.D., FAAP. The truths that he brought out will certainly affect my, and certainly many others’, practice of medicine and view of life.

I am encouraged by this sign of improvement and may soon join the ranks of your membership. However, there are still many changes that need to occur, starting with the issues brought up in Second Opinions by Drs. Feroli and de Miranda. The AAP must officially denounce the horrid “abortal-birth abortion” and end support of Planned Parenthood, the abortion machine of this country.

Danny L. Price, M.D.
Dallas, TX

Put life into perspective

Thank you for printing a very positive article about Christianity and a child’s terminal illness (“Religious faith provides strength to confront death,” March AAP News).

It is fashionable to portray Christians as miserably unhappy bigots who run around trying to spoil everybody else’s life as well. I expect you will get letters about that article protesting the unnatural entanglement of faith and science.

In reality, it is shallow thinking that focuses on the physical alone. Only those who understand their origin and destiny can put this life into perspective.

If you think you are only an accident and ultimately destined for oblivion, self-esteem may be a real problem. In addition, from that perspective, facing difficulties or even delaying gratification becomes more than anyone can ask.

But the one who chose a loving Creator and a final victory is free to live life to the fullest, no matter how hard the road. It is time we physicians stop ignoring the rest of the story.

Ross S. Olson, M.D., FAAP
Minneapolis, MN

AAP should avoid abortion stance

I read the Second Opinions in the March AAP News regarding the Academy’s abortion philosophy. I generally don’t write letters regarding the abortion issue because it tends to be an issue where a lot of heat and very little light is generated. The problem with being either pro-choice or pro-life is that people who argue quite dramatically on both sides of the issue never start from the same premise. This means that there is no way the groups can ever come to any kind of consensus or compromise.

While I don’t necessarily personally disagree with either Dr. Feroli or Dr. de Miranda, I think this is an issue that is so emotional and tied up with religious beliefs, it should not be an issue upon which the Academy takes a stance. Certainly, all of us have our own personal beliefs and lifestyles. Some of us are willing to be less judgmental about abortion and Planned Parenthood. While I certainly would rather that my teen-age patients not become parents, and while I would certainly rather they did not choose abortion, I think it is my place to help them deal with their adult decisions rather than to force my personal beliefs on them.

I believe the AAP should confine its recommendations, its philosophies, and its policies to those medical issues that are medically related and can stand up to scientific scrutiny. I don’t believe the AAP should make any statements regarding issues upon which there is no middle ground for us to come together.

Pamela S. Smith, M.D., FAAP
Sycamore, OH

Don’t deny patients the whole story

Dr. de Miranda’s belief in the “right to life of the unborn” is certainly his own espouse, but not in a setting where scientific fact should be pre-eminent over religious dogma (Second Opinions, March AAP News).

Dr. de Miranda objects to an AAP publication that includes reference listings for Planned Parenthood. Among a litany of misinformatory statements from Dr. de Miranda is the ultra-rightist propaganda statement that “Planned Parenthood of America is known as the single, largest U.S. abortion-provider.”

First of all, there is no such organization, Planned Parenthood of America. Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) is an umbrella organization for more than 150 local Planned Parenthood affiliates in the United States. Less than half of the affiliates support clinics that perform abortions, and PPFA, itself, offers no clinical services.

What virtually all Planned Parenthood affiliates do provide is family planning services for teens — in places like Ft.