

Medical Research, makes up 8 percent of a total annual medical research budget of \$1.46 billion. The importance of charitable donations is even more marked in the field of cancer research, where charities account for 20 percent of the \$260 million spent (salaries included) in this area.

In an attempt to restore ARC's credibility and to ensure its survival, a six-member working group made up of members of the board, but excluding Crozemarie, is now in place to review the association's operations and to respond publicly to the charges. Some critics argue, however, that a group made up of board members, some of whom have sprung to Crozemarie's defense in the past, is ill-placed to investigate and to respond to the allegations. If ARC's executive board fails to make changes, the government could revoke ARC's status as an association "working for the public good", a label that not only makes potential donors feel that the money will be put to good use, but is also a tax write-off.

CATHERINE TASTEMAIN  
Paris

## DID YOU KNOW?

### Needed: Nurses and money

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) has issued a call for more and better-trained nurses. A new IOM committee report, *Nursing Staff in Hospitals and Nursing Homes: Is it Adequate?*, recommends that hospitals increase the number of registered nurses with advanced training and skills, and suggests that nursing homes implement around-the-clock registered nurse coverage by the year 2000. The report suggests that the added cost could be funded through Medicare and Medicaid, an idea that is sure to catch the attention of Congress.

JENNIFER K. SNOW

### India gets patent on anticlot drug

Thrombinase, a novel clot-dissolving agent derived from a strain of *Bacillus sphaericus*, now has a US patent. The potential new drug has use "for the treatment of cerebral thrombosis, myocardial infarction, deep vein thrombosis and in the prevention of post-surgical adhesions," according to N.K. Sharma, manager of the state-owned National Research Development Corporation in New Delhi. Sharma says the promising compound should hit the market in two to three years, pending the outcome of planned clinical trials.

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## Principles for physician advertising in Israel issued by IMA

Israeli medical authorities have taken the first step toward allowing the country's physicians to advertise their services. The Ministry of Health and the Israel Medical Association (IMA) have issued a statement announcing principles under which physician advertising will be allowed. These principles will form the basis for amending a current law that bans all such advertising. In fact, even though this law is still on the books, ministry officials say from now on it will no longer be enforced. "In my view, the law was absurd, and its amendment will benefit the public," says Boaz Lev, the ministry's associate director-general. However, the law doesn't apply to institutions, which are free to make any outrageous claims they choose in order to gather business, something the IMA also plans to rectify.

The law in question is the so-called "Physicians' Ordinance," which dates from the time when Palestine, before the establishment of Israel in 1949, was ruled by a British mandatory government. The Ordinance, intended to protect the dignity of the medical profession, completely bans "direct or indirect" advertising by specific practitioners. Similar laws ban advertising by members of other professions, such as lawyers.

Under the new principles proposed by the Ministry of Health and the IMA, acceptable physician advertisements will only contain "essential information, such as name, specialty, area of expertise, address, phone number, etc." Advertisements that mislead the public by providing partial or faulty information, as well as those offending other practitioners or degrading the profession, will be prohibited. Furthermore, physicians will only be able to advertise in print and not via the electronic media, because the latter is more costly and would introduce discrimination on the basis of financial means. "I think it's the doctors' right, after all the years of specialization, to say what they do, but within the limits of good taste and the law," said Dr. Eran

Dolev, head of the IMA's ethics committee and a member of the commission that formulated the new rules.

Although an amendment to the Physicians' Ordinance has been in the works for some time, the release of the guidelines at this particular time was spurred, among other factors, by a recent ruling of the Israel Supreme Court permitting three medical groups to advertise. The three companies, which serve as middlemen for people considering plastic surgery, had been forbidden to advertise by the Tel Aviv District

Court. But Supreme Court President Aharon Barak and Justices Shlomo Levin and Yitzhak Zamir overturned that injunction, ruling that the ban on advertising applied only to individual "licensed physicians," not to corporations. The justices also said the law only forbids advertising the talents or virtues of a specific medical practitioner, something the companies did not do because they mentioned no names. Furthermore, the

justices recommended that the law be reconsidered because it infringes both on freedom of occupation and expression and the public's right to know. They added that advertising serves the public by helping people choose a doctor and promoting competition, which could both improve service and reduce the price of care.

Passing an amendment to the law through the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, will take at least several months. Meanwhile, the ministry and IMA are busy preparing principles that will apply to advertising by medical centers and institutions. Because these are not headed by physicians, they are not subject to the same restrictions as the doctors. Thus, unlike individual physicians, they are free to make outrageous claims in their ads, according to Dolev. "Today anything goes; it's a lawless territory, and order has to be introduced," he says.

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Israeli ad for a *Helicobacter pylori* testing company.