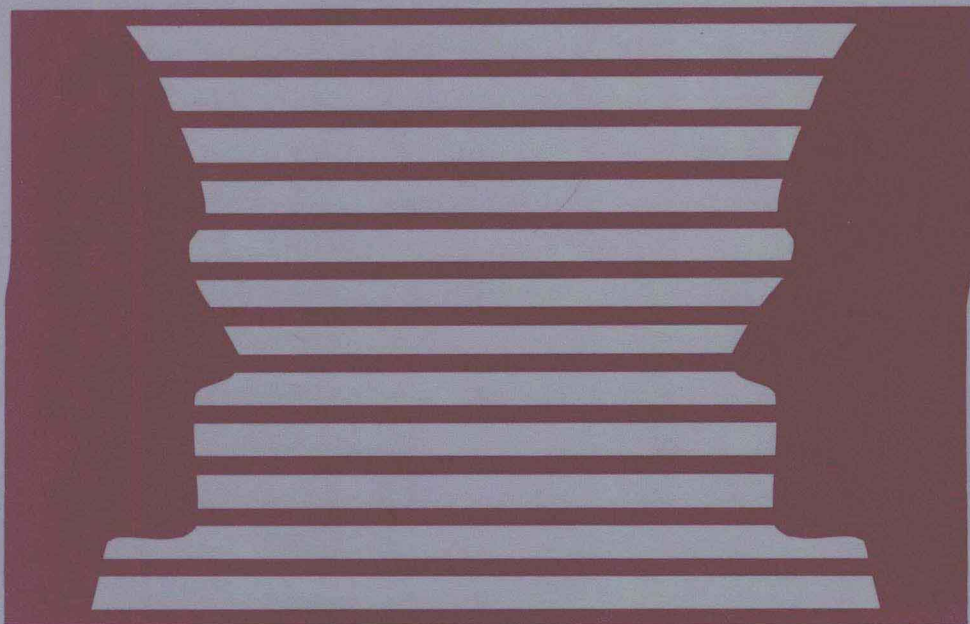

DEBATES IN MEDICINE



Gitnick
Barnes
Duffy
Winterbauer

DEBATES IN MEDICINE

Volume 2

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Copyeditor: Elizabeth Griffith

Production Project Manager: Max Perez

Proofroom Manager: Shirley E. Taylor

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Editor-in-Chief

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Professor, Department of Medicine
UCLA School of Medicine
Center for Health Sciences
Los Angeles, California

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Thomas P. Duffy, M.D.

Professor of Medicine
Section of Hematology
Department of Internal Medicine
Yale University School of Medicine
New Haven, Connecticut

Richard H. Winterbauer, M.D.

Head, Section of Chest and Infectious Diseases
Department of Medicine
Virginia Mason Clinic
Seattle, Washington

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This volume is dedicated to those students and colleagues whose pointed questions foster controversy, promote research, and expand education. It is also dedicated to my wife Cherna and my children, Neil, Kim, Jill, and Tracy. It is because of them that it is all worthwhile.

Contributors

Nicholas R. Anthonisen, M.D.

Respiratory Investigation Unit
General Center
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Colin E. Atterbury, M.D.

Associate Professor of Medicine (Hepatology)
Yale University School of Medicine
New Haven, Connecticut
Assistant Chief of Staff
Professional Review
Veterans Administration Medical Center
West Haven, Connecticut

William Bell, M.D.

Division of Hematology
Department of Medicine
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and Hospital
Baltimore, Maryland

Stuart H. Cohen, M.D.

Assistant Professor
Department of Internal Medicine
University of California at Davis School of Medicine
Sacramento, California

Harold O. Conn, M.D.

Veterans Administration Medical Center
West Haven, Connecticut
Yale University School of Medicine
New Haven, Connecticut

James D. Cox, M.D.

Physician-in-Chief
University of Texas
M. D. Anderson Cancer Center
Houston, Texas

Paul Ernsberger, Ph.D.

Department of Neurology
Cornell University Medical College
New York, New York

Robert J. Ginsberg, M.D.

Mount Sinai Hospital
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Russell D. Hull, M.B.B.S., M.Sc.

Professor, Department of Medicine
McMaster University
Chief of Medicine
Chedoke Hospital Division
Chedoke-McMaster Hospitals
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

James F. Jones, M.D.

Department of Pediatrics
National Jewish Center for Immunology and Respiratory Medicine
Denver, Colorado

Frederic C. Kass, M.D., J.D., M.P.A.

Harvard Medical School
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute
Boston, Massachusetts

Ritsuko Komaki, M.D.

Associate Professor of Radiotherapy
University of Texas
M. D. Anderson Cancer Center
Houston, Texas

Michael A. Matthay, M.D.

Associate Professor of Medicine and Anesthesia
Associate Director
Intensive Care Unit
University of California, San Francisco
Cardiovascular Research Institute
San Francisco, California

James R. McCormick, M.D.

Chief, Pulmonary Disease Section
Veterans Administration Medical Center
Associate Professor of Medicine
Medical College of Georgia
Augusta, Georgia

Mark Morin, B.A., M.S.

Department of Medicine
Stanford University School of Medicine
Stanford, California

Alvin Novick, M.D.

Professor, Department of Biology
Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut

David G. Payne, M.D.

Ontario Cancer Institute
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Thierry Poynard, M.D., Ph.D.

Service D'Hépatologie et De Gastroentérologie
Hôpital Antoine Beclère
Clamart, France

Gary E. Raskob, M.Sc.

Clinical Trial Specialist
Department of Medicine
McMaster University
Chedoke-McMaster Hospitals
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

C. George Ray, M.D.

Professor, Departments of Pathology and Pediatrics
University of Arizona College of Medicine
Tucson, Arizona

Eugene D. Robin, M.D.

Department of Medicine
Stanford University School of Medicine
Stanford, California

F. John Service, M.D.

Departments of Endocrinology and Internal Medicine
Mayo Clinic
Rochester, Minnesota

Joseph Silva, Jr., M.D.

Professor and Chairman
Department of Internal Medicine
University of California at Davis School of Medicine
Sacramento, California

Ethan A. H. Sims, M.D.

Professor Emeritus of Medicine
College of Medicine
University of Vermont
Attending Physician
Medical Center Hospital of Vermont
Burlington, Vermont

Thomas E. Starzl, M.D., Ph.D.

Professor, Department of Surgery
University Health Center of Pittsburgh
University of Pittsburgh
Veterans Administration Medical Center
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Frank Vinicor, M.D.

Associate Professor of Medicine
Regenstrief Institute for Health Care
Regenstrief Health Center
Indiana University School of Medicine
Staff Physician
Veterans Administration Medical Center
Indianapolis, Indiana

Preface

In medicine, controversy exists as long as a disease's cause and cure remain mysterious. The purpose of this volume, and others in this series, is to provide the reader with current concepts of etiology, pathogenesis, course, and treatment for a variety of medical illnesses about which controversy remains.

The topics selected are those that seem especially important during the year of this book's publication. The debate format is used as a teaching tool with the authors assigned protagonist or antagonist roles based on their previous experience, writings, and interests. They are all experts in the fields in which they are writing.

I have asked the authors to present their arguments as if they were attorneys defending a client. Thus, they were asked to make the best case possible for the side assigned to them regardless of their own personal beliefs. After each debate, an editor summarizes the issues and provides the reader with guidelines for approaching information that will develop in the future.

This book is limited by our current state of knowledge. It can only illuminate our current perspectives on these issues. Within a few years, some of the controversies described in this volume may be definitively resolved. Nevertheless, the teaching value of the debate format is likely to endure. It is my conviction that out of controversy, truth will emerge. Controversy is a catalyst for research and for education.

My associate editors and I sincerely hope that readers will not only enjoy and be stimulated by these encounters in which equally matched intellectual opponents spiritedly argue antithetical positions, but that they will also expand their overall knowledge of these areas of controversy.

Susan Dashe efficiently and expertly brought together the materials that eventually resulted in this text. Her dedication makes it possible for these volumes to be published in a timely manner. The editor and the associate editors extend to her our sincere gratitude.

Gary Gitnick, M.D.

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Should Hospitalized Patients Be Tested for Human Immunodeficiency Virus?



Chapter Editor: Thomas P. Duffy, M.D.



Affirmative:

Frederic C. Kass, M.D., J.D.,
M.P.A.

Harvard Medical School; Dana-Farber
Cancer Institute, Boston, Massachusetts



Negative:

Alvin Novick, M.D.

Professor, Department of Biology, Yale
University, New Haven, Connecticut



Affirmative*

Frederic C. Kass, M.D., J.D., M.P.A.

The Impetus for HIV Testing

The impetus behind screening hospitalized patients for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) arises from three closely related trends: (1) the increasing prevalence of HIV infection; (2) the increasing acceptance of HIV screening; and (3) the emergence of HIV infection as an occupational disease.

The increasing prevalence of HIV infection has made the virus a common pathogen in American hospitals. More than 52,000 patients with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) have been reported to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) since 1981, and it is now estimated that between 1 and 2 million persons in the United States are infected with the virus. The highest prevalence of HIV infection occurs among those with recognized risk factors. It is estimated that between 50% and 65% of intravenous drug abusers in New York City are infected. Studies of seropositivity among homosexual and bisexual men range from 10% to 70%. Approximately 70% of those with hemophilia A and 35% of those with hemophilia B are infected, and between 10% and 60% of the heterosexual partners of infected men have seroconverted.

Recently, it has become apparent that there is a high prevalence of HIV infection among certain populations of hospitalized patients. In one study of blood specimens obtained from 506 patients submitted to the clinical chemistry laboratory of an urban teaching hospital, 3.0% had antibody to HIV. In another study of cord blood samples obtained at the delivery of 602 children in a large inner-city municipal hospital, 2.0% indicated infection. A study of critical emergency room patients older than age 14 years found 3.0% infected; however, 16% of critical trauma patients between the ages of 25 and 34 were found in that study to be seropositive. Although hospitalized patients have not in the past been considered to be a high-risk group that should be screened for HIV, these data would seem to support the implementation of routine testing for certain groups of patients.

As the prevalence of HIV infection has increased, so has the importance of HIV screening become increasingly accepted. Tests to detect antibody to HIV were first licensed by the Food and Drug Administration in 1985 as a means of screening blood and plasma donations. Since that time, probably more than 10 million donors have been screened. In October 1985, the United States Department of Defense began routinely testing

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