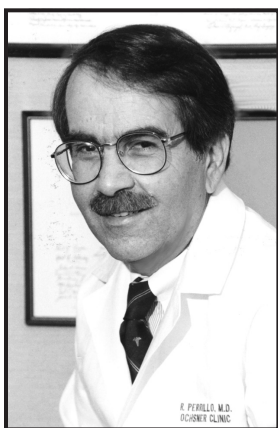


From The Editor's Desk



Robert Perrillo, MD
Editor-in-Chief

Welcome to the spring 2002 issue of the Ochsner Journal. We inaugurate this issue with Dr. Lynn Witherspoon's discussion of informatics, which is something that each and everyone of us utilize each and every day in one or another capacity. Loosely translated, informatics is the study of how computers can be used to help doctors (and patients) in their organization, analysis, management and use of health care information. Our residents find this second nature nowadays, but older folks such as myself have had to rethink what we thought was perfectly well organized and easy to retrieve. As a clinical researcher, I wonder how we ever survived the days of tedious chart reviews!

This is followed by a more somber but enlightening discussion by Dr. Michael Kiernan of the patterns of tobacco use among our youth today. Importantly, Dr. Kiernan addresses ways of helping the adolescent smoker quit, which I believe will be of use to the reader.

The benefits of fish oil have been discussed in the popular and medical press for decades. Dr. Alaswad and his colleagues in the Department of Cardiology and Mid America Heart Institute have put a clear perspective together on the value of this approach in the prevention of coronary artery disease. I was fascinated to learn,

however, that benefits of fish oil also extend from its antiarrhythmic effects, and I trust that you will find additional useful information on this underutilized form of therapy.

Next, Dr. Satheesh Nair of the Section on Gastroenterology and Hepatology presents a concise, up-to-date review of the pathophysiology, diagnosis, and treatment options for nonalcoholic fatty liver. This is an incredibly common liver condition that is second only to hepatitis C in frequency in an ambulatory liver clinic setting, and, as Dr. Nair points out, it can lead to cirrhosis among the elderly. Earlier recognition and treatment by weight reduction and, possibly, the use of insulin sensitizing agents may forestall the progressive fibrosis that occurs in at least 20% of these patients.

The approach to end of life care by Dr. David Lee of the Section on Hospital-Based Medicine presents an interesting historical perspective of the end of life care movement and provides useful recommendations and suggestions for this important aspect of medicine that most of us confront in one way or another.

Almost as a companion piece to Dr. Witherspoon's discussion of informatics is the article by Dr. Andrew Schechtman of the Department of Family Medicine on the use of personal digital assistants or PDAs. These have rapidly become an indispensable tool to our residents in training and have great use potential for all physicians. They have revolutionized the way that physicians learn, and guidance for the advanced user can be found in this interesting article.

As part of our *Under the Microscope* feature, Drs. Om Prakash, Javed Gill, and Gist Farr of the Departments of Pathology and Laboratory of Molecular Oncology round off this issue with a discussion of immune disorders and susceptibility to neoplasms. This is followed by a discussion of the life and career of one of the founding fathers of the Ochsner Clinic Foundation, Dr. Guy Caldwell. The vignette, presented by Dr. Hector Ventura of the Department of Cardiology, is based on personal interviews with Dr. Caldwell's grandson and senior staff who knew him, providing a fascinating glimpse of a visionary physician.

As always, I hope you enjoy the diverse mixture of materials included and welcome any comments that you may have about the content and direction of the Journal. 