

From the Editors

Planting Question Marks

In an age that rushes toward finding answers—if not certainty—the tradition of CQ's open forum is to plant question marks along the path. The questions raised in this open forum force us to rethink issues we thought were settled and to open ourselves to new quandaries.

In their article, "Precision and the Rules of Prioritization," John McMillan, Tony Hope, and Dominic Wilkinson ask how precise policy guidelines should be for resource allocation. They examine excesses of precision and vagueness and offer suggestions on how to strike the proper balance.

The answer to the question raised by John J. Newhouse and Edward Balotsky in their article, "What Motivates Hospital CEOs to Commit to Ethical Integration in Their Organizations," is one everyone wants to know. The role of keystone values inherent in the proper delivery of healthcare services is examined against a narrow, market-driven perspective that is economically focused.

In "In Praise of the Humanities in Academic Medicine: Values, Metrics, and Ethics in Uncertain Times," Joseph J. Fins, Barbara Pohl, and David J. Doukas pose the question, What assessment methods are adequate to capture what the humanities offer in medical education? They argue against the prevalent reductionist metrics, which they hold are ill suited to measure the value of the humanities.

As the number of institutions that are adopting electronic health records continues to rise, proponents and critics heighten their arguments. In "Ethics of Data Sequestration in Electronic Health Records," Nicholas Genes and Joseph Appel argue that addressing privacy concerns by blocking access to portions of the medical record, or excluding some information, erodes the doctor-patient relationship and narrows the doctor's perspective of the patient by focusing on the trees and ignoring the forest. They ask: how can they focus on the forest, after all, if they are not permitted maps?

Although we are accustomed to the fact that computer algorithms have an impact on our buying habits of more mundane items, when it comes to online advertising about (and perhaps manipulation of) our health choices and treatments, serious concerns are generated. In "Engineering Medical Decisions: Computer Algorithms and the Manipulation of Choice," Meredith Stark and Joseph Fins raise the disturbing question of whether these algorithms are rendering us "geniuses or puppets" and call our attention to "the ongoing need to venture backstage, behind the curtain and beyond the pixels" to inform ourselves.

In "Justice, Mercy, and the Terminally Ill Prisoner," Ben A. Rich focuses a beam of light on the political and bureaucratic roadblocks of an end-of-life issue in the

criminal justice context. Despite a plethora of guidelines, policy statements, and scholarly analyses, the question of what morality requires with regard to sick and dying inmates is one that demands reexamination.

Curtain Call: *CQ* is an ensemble production, and no cast member has contributed more than Production Coordinator Peg Currie. As Peg retires from this stage, we rise to give her a standing ovation.