



## The 2007 Essay Contests

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### EDITOR'S MESSAGE



By John Loofbourow, MD

THE SSVMS BOARD OF DIRECTORS recently approved and laid out procedures for a \$500 essay contest proposed by the Editorial Committee. Subsequently a matching donation doubled that amount, allowing us to invite two classes of competitors: junior/senior high school students; and medical student/residents.

Bill Sandberg and David Gibson met with several high school administrators, who offered suggestions. The committee bounced many email revisions of the announcement back and forth until reaching a final draft.

In early December 2006, invitational letters and announcement posters were sent to high schools in our three counties. Email notices were sent to UCD medical students/resident members. In addition, all physician members whose emails are current<sup>1</sup> were emailed the announcement for high school students, so they might alert friends, family, or others whose children might want to participate.

In both cases, the important dates and details are the same:

- Entries must be received by 5:00 p.m. on April 4, 2007.
- The winning essay will be announced April 30, 2007.
- The winning essay will be published in Sierra Sacramento Valley Medicine.
- The winning author will be awarded \$500.

The announcements are summarized on the inside back cover. Complete announcements and guidelines are posted on the SSV Medicine web site at [www.ssvms.org](http://www.ssvms.org).

Editorial Committee members realize that the topics are not simple. Yet these questions are seminal in determining the future of medicine for those who will write the essays, and for the rest of us as well. We are confident that there are those who will address these essay topics with determination and skill.

While announcements were sent only to local students and UCD medical students/residents, competition is not limited to them. It would be unfair to exclude, for example, a member's grandchild who lives in West Virginia.

Furthermore the topic for medical students/residents is global<sup>2</sup>; it's a big world with big problems. There is a risk that no one will write at all in a world stupefied by TV. Yet we still value the written word, even if it is sometimes only apparent in text messaging or drama.<sup>3</sup>

This essay contest is our modest effort to assist in a literary code blue, and at the same time to reach out to our members and to the world we live in.

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1. If you didn't get an email notice, we may have an obsolete address, or one you don't use. If that seems to be the case, contact Melissa Darling at the Medical Society or at MDarling@ssvms.org to update your file. Email is the most economical and most efficient way we can communicate.
2. See Dr. George Meyer's review in our last issue of the AMA publication, "Awakening Hippocrates," by Edward O. O'Neil. Also, Tracy Kidder's Award winning book about Paul Farmer and Jim Kim, "Mountains Beyond Mountains."
3. A Dec. 1, 2006 Sacramento Bee article reported on a world wide competition for the Guinness record in text messaging. Ang Chuang Yang, 16, of Singapore nosed out Ben Cook of Provo, Utah in thumbing 162 operations within 42 seconds, about 3.9 operations per second. There could be no mistakes, including periods and capitals, and no abbreviations in the following text about piranhas: The razor toothed piranhas of the genera Serrasalmus and Pygocentrus are the most ferocious freshwater fish in the world. In reality they seldom attack a human. People's capacity to develop new skills is simply incomprehensible and unpredictable, particularly when disguised as a teenager.

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