



The world is in a perpetual state of flux. Each day, people's lives are affected in unimaginable ways by unpredictable events, from natural disasters to economic recession. Amidst this environment of uncertainty, one thing remains certain: our health is of central and utmost importance. In fact, some might say our health is synonymous with our wealth. Nevertheless, our health care systems are strongly impacted by economic and political developments. Over the past few years, the world has experienced a recession of historic proportions. Some countries are on the road to recovery while others have suffered more enduring consequences. Recessionary times have led to stringent budget cutbacks and new policies for the allocation of scarce resources, ultimately affecting the quality and provision of health care. This edition of the TSMJ explores the current economic reality in the context of the Irish health care system. For example, a review of recent trends in drug prescribing reveals Ireland's struggle to offer an effective system for delivering medications to those in need given a shrinking healthcare budget. Furthermore, this issue of the TSMJ raises the question whether the current focus on budgets and figures is impeding the successful delivery of high quality, personalized health care. One of our authors considers the potential risks of budget cuts for the mental health care sector while another author discusses the nearing extinction of the GP house call in rural Ireland and the transformation of GPs' offices into "mini hospitals".

In these times of economic hardship and instability, the fact remains that our health requires priority attention. As physicians, we cannot ignore the implications of recession on both our patients and our society as a whole. If ever there was a time to remind ourselves of the importance of the personal side of medicine, now is that time.

Likewise, in this climate of cutbacks and compromise, we must not forget the value and importance of medical research. Ongoing research facilitates advancements in medical knowledge, technology, diagnostics and therapeutics, which in turn allow us to deliver a system of health care that is efficient, high quality and responsive to our evolving world. The TSMJ promotes continuing medical education by offering students the unique opportunity to participate in and learn from the research process. Throughout this edition of the TSMJ, it is evident that current research is expanding our knowledge and changing our ap-

proaches to treatment. New concepts such as inducing hypothermia to treat cardiac arrest and the introduction of vaccines to prevent cervical cancer are reviewed in this edition. In addition, new insight into the treatment of hyponatraemia and trigeminal neuralgia are addressed and serve as a testament to the value of evidence-based research and lessons learned in the clinical context. Interesting developments in the complex areas of hippocampal neurogenesis, cardiac rehabilitation programs, and atopic disease illustrate the far reaching and diverse impacts that research has on our current and future health care systems.

As medical practitioners, we can do our part to ensure that the quality of health care is not compromised by investing time and energy in our professional development. Medical students are constantly taught and tested on the more common medical afflictions. While these conditions contribute to a vast majority of medical diagnoses, as future medical practitioners we must not overlook the weird and wonderful medical illnesses we may encounter. By committing to continual learning and staying abreast of research developments, we increase our ability to recognize new and rare conditions, often misdiagnosed as more classic conditions, thereby ensuring appropriate management. In this edition of the TSMJ, we explore the diagnosis and management of new and rare conditions such as congenital long QT syndrome, broken heart syndrome and eosinophilic oesophagitis.

Over the past decade, the TSMJ has expanded to include student works from all fields of health care and all of Ireland's medical schools. We received an overwhelming number of submissions this year, and we are proud and excited that the student community has demonstrated such a keen interest in the journal and in research as an entity. We thank all of this year's authors and editors for their hard work and commitment to the TSMJ. We extend our appreciation, as well, to all students who submitted articles and we encourage and welcome your submissions to future publications. We hope that, as medical students and future physicians, you will strive to question what you hear, validate what you learn and consecrate your knowledge through evidence-based research.

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