

A Piece of My Mind. A New Collection of Essays From JAMA, The Journal of the American Medical Association. Roxanne K. Young, editor. JAMA & ARCHIVES JOURNALS. Chicago (IL): AMA Press; 2000. 332 pages; ISBN: 1-57947-082-3; price: US\$34.00

During our morning rounds, Dr Mladen Sekso, professor of internal medicine, rarely missed the chance to remind us of what we were to expect from the medical profession: "You will cure and save – if lucky, some of your patients, treat and help many of them, but should be prepared to care for and comfort all of them." To achieve that and be as good physicians as possible, we studied not only physics, chemistry, physiology, and anatomy, but also psychology, epidemiology, and social sciences. I followed the advice of an old professor of public health and went to the Croatian National Theater as well as to surgical theaters.

While I was still a student, I met Matko Marušić, at that time Assistant Professor at the Department of Physiology. His motto – "find delight in variety, freedom in doubt, and care and love in everything" – was something I thought to be a good starting point for a young doctor. For a quarter of a century of knowing each other, Matko and I have shared common interest in books. We both like reading, albeit we often disagree upon book's value. I respect and admire his scientific publications, but his literary work, included into obligatory reading list in primary schools in Croatia, is even better and deserves grater respect. A few days ago he challenged me with a task of writing a review of "A Piece of My Mind". It is a collection of essays previously published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), a journal whose goal is "to promote the science and art of medicine and the betterment of the public health". At the beginning of January 2001, JAMA, read regularly by 350,000 physicians, has reached its 285th volume. Twenty years ago the JAMA Editorship established a "A Piece of My Mind" column, wishing to offer their readers not only the results of scientific investigations or epidemiological surveys, but also the personal accounts of patient-physician relationship, which described aspects usually not contained in a hospital chart.

The first collection of "A Piece of My Mind" stories was published in 1988. For the second issue, Ms Roxanne K. Young, Associate Editor and Section Editor, has chosen 98 of 800 articles (one eight of the total number) that have been published in the section "A Piece of My Mind" during the past twenty years. The articles are divided into five chapters, *Thanks for the Memories* (33 stories), *The "Practice" of Medicine* (28), *The View*

From Here (19), *All in the Family* (11), and *The Dark Side* (9). Although the authors of the stories in *A Piece of My Mind* are mostly physicians from all medical specialties, in all phases of their career, there are also nurses and social workers who also wanted to share their inner worlds with others. The book is enriched with the "Glossary" – the list of less known words, terms from medical practice that non-medical readers are less familiar with, and their explanations.

Every August issue of the JAMA brings "A Piece of My Mind" with a subtitle "Memorial to Hiroshima" as a way of paying honor to the victims of violence, especially among medical personnel exposed to the war atrocities, torture, and crime. In August 1994, the story published in this section was "Do angels cry?", written by Matko Marušić and devoted to Goran and Jurica, two young boys killed in their shelter during the bombing of Slavonski Brod, on June 24, 1992. The story is included in the chapter *The Dark Side* of the 2000 collection. The Croatian (longer) version of the story appeared shortly afterwards in *Večernji list*, a major Croatian newspaper, and received an international Serra award.

Other stories in this book cover the range of experiences from the junior medical student's days and first days of internship, to full blown years of career in different fields of medicine, to the days of deserved retirement. Practicing medicine is a lasting, unique, intricate, and rewarding lattice of continual learning. A patient-physicians encounter starts an endless array of interactions. The relationship brings along not only the diagnosis and treatment that is of significance for the patient but also produces an unavoidable impact upon physician. Birth and death can be equally stressful and represent an emotional burden. Physicians are, by their profession, more often than other people confronted with death. Every day after leaving the hospital and driving home, they leave behind a piece of their soul. In everyday practice, they need to explain all ifs, ands, and buts of their patients' diseases, which are often out of physicians' total control. Another source of frustration is that they are expected to fit the image of a confident, capable, calm, all-knowing, always-in-charge physician. But of course they get frustrated and angry when they feel helpless, exhausted, and overworked. We physicians are usually negligent toward our own souls since we haven't been taught to devote the

time necessary to record our personal accounts of the experiences, of our feelings (positive or negative), of our life in hospital. As we are all prone to quickly forget, our memories of events gradually change and get distorted, sometimes even completely erased, as if those events never happened. Writing could be, at least partly, an emotional safety valve.

If perhaps the most difficult experience in a physician's life is treating (or not) one's own family, what to say about a physician confronted with his or her own illness and foreseeable end. That is something I could add a piece of my mind to. After I have read all the stories in the book, from the very first to the very last, in the one titled "Perspective Shift" I found so many places, elements of my own, albeit never written, professional and personal life story. From medical student and G.P. to a researcher and university teacher, to a pulmonologist and allergologist, to a physician who is at the same time a patient with an established diagnosis.

Why did physicians write their stories? Why do people write stories at all? Ivo Andrić had been searching for this question ever since he published his first poems in *Croatian Young Lyrics* in 1914 until his Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech delivered in Stockholm in December, 1961: "In thousands of languages, in the most di-

verse climes, from century to century, beginning with the very old stories told around the hearth in the huts of our remote ancestors down to the works of modern storytellers, which are appearing at this moment in the publishing houses of the great cities of the world, it is the story of the human condition that is being spun and that men never get weary of telling to one another. The manner of telling and the form of the story vary according to periods and circumstances, but the taste for telling and retelling a story remains the same: the narrative flows endlessly and never runs dry. Thus, at times, one might almost believe that from the first dawn of consciousness throughout the ages, mankind has constantly been telling itself the same story, though with infinite variations, to the rhythm of its breath and pulse. And one might say that after the fashion of the legendary and eloquent Scheherazade, this story attempts to stave off the executioner, to suspend the ineluctable decree of fate that threatens us, and to prolong the illusion of life and of time. Or should the storyteller by his work help man to know and to recognize himself."

After reading this book one cannot but agree with him. The authors of the essays in the *Peace of My Mind* succeeded in preserving their own experiences and sharing them with us.

Ivica Vučak

Huard J, Fu FH, editors. Gene Therapy and Tissue Engineering in Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine. Boston: Birkhauser; 2000. 304 pages; ISBN 0-8176-4071-1; price: \$94.00.

Field of medicine: orthopedics, sports medicine, biotechnology, and molecular biology.

Format: hardcover book.

Audience: specialists in orthopedics and sports medicine, molecular biologists.

Purpose: To describe principles and methods of gene therapy and tissue engineering and their specific application in orthopedics and sports medicine.

Content: The book is divided in four parts. The first part contains two chapters, which deal with the general aspects of gene therapy, its perspectives, and possible role in the treatment of different musculoskeletal disorders, common viral vectors, plasmids, and other strategies for gene transfer to the musculoskeletal system, such as cell therapy or *ex vivo* gene transfer approach. The second part describes applications of gene therapy for the musculoskeletal system. It comprises six chapters (chapters 3-8) and covers the specific fields of orthopedics and sports medicine, and the possibilities of gene therapy in the treatment of bone and cartilage disorders (chapter 3) or spinal disorders (chapter 4). Chapter 5 discusses the influence of specific growth factors on the process of muscle healing and analyzes the possible role of gene therapy in the regulation of growth factor levels to improve the healing processes. Chapter 6 emphasizes

the role of nonviral gene therapy by *ex vivo* gene transfer method for the repair of osteochondral articular defects. Possible application of gene therapy in the treatment of *osteogenesis imperfecta* is discussed in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 describes the role of nitric oxide in the treatment of sport injuries and possible application of gene therapy to influence the level of this metabolite. The third part is divided in four chapters (chapter 9-12) that discuss tissue-engineering methods in orthopedics and sports medicine. Basic properties and characteristics of mesenchymal stem cells and their role in tissue engineering are described in Chapter 9. Chapter 10 focuses on the healing of injured ligaments and possibilities to improve their mechanical and functional properties by application of tissue engineering methods. Chapter 11 covers orthopedic applications of muscle-based tissue engineering technique, whereas the potentials of tissue engineering in cartilage repair are addressed in Chapter 12.

The three final chapters belong to the fourth part of the book, which analyzes the difficulties coupled with the application of gene therapy and tissue engineering, and discusses possible means to overcome those difficulties. Tissue rejection by immune mechanisms and approaches to overcome those reactions are discussed in Chapter 13. Chapter 14 presents viral vectors for gene transfer to the musculoskeletal system, such as retrovirus-

es, adenoviruses, herpes simplex viruses, adeno-associated viruses, and non-viral vectors. Chapter 15 describes in greater detail adeno-associated viral vectors.

Highlights: This is an excellent book that provides a detailed information on the molecular principles of gene therapy and widely discusses possibilities and limitations of its application in the specialized field of orthopedics and sports medicine. The book is illustrated by 51 figures, including 8 tables that systematically overview specific topics, graphs, photomicrographs, x-ray pictures, and schemes, which help in the presentation of ba-

sic concepts in gene therapy and its specific orthopedic applications. The text is clear, easy to read, and points to significant number of relevant references.

The book links two highly specific fields of the molecular biology and clinical medicine. It should help molecular biologists to better understand the specific problems and possibilities in the orthopedic application of gene therapy, as well as orthopedic experts to better understand the molecular basis and opportunities of gene therapy.

Nataša Kovačić