

Editor's Page

Medical Information from Reliable Non-Medical Electronic and Print Media

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Over the last few months I have developed a degree of dependence on the daily information provided by the electronic edition of the Wall Street Journal. Don't think I'm checking on my shares; I've never owned a single one. I just find the "Health" section of that trusty publication extremely interesting and instructive. It may sound perverse, even sinful, for an academic who has wide access to a large number of medical publications to seek daily updates from the health section of a financial journal. However, I hope I have sufficient reasons to justify this "sin". Let me explain.

Medical information, in total, is a complex matter with multiple dimensions. Progressively over the last fifty years, disparate sciences, such as molecular biology and pharmacology, as well as biotechnology and the fields of computers and microelectronics, have contributed to unprecedented progress in both diagnostic and therapeutic medicine. Inevitably, this progress is tied in with business corporations, their investments, and their research and development planning.

The medical profession must remain steadfastly true to its Hippocratic Oath. It would be hypocritical and naïve, however, to overlook the fact that our profession has a huge dependence on this new reality, which is one characterised by technological advance, financial investment, and the flourishing of companies that hold sway in our country. Research institutions,

health care administrators, and of course regulatory authorities communicate and collaborate with the commercial colossi in our field—one hopes with the patient's benefit in mind.

Within this complex reality, I think it is easy to understand why the information provided by reliable financial publications about health-related topics is comprehensive, promptly updated, and pertinent. Their editors, as experienced professionals, paint a picture of a new, contemporary *status quo*, a less romantic one than many of us physicians would like. From hour to hour, these publications are in a position to stay on top of stories, such as how the FDA has approved such and such a stent, what are the early results from a multi-centre study, or how a company is likely to be affected by a wide product recall. Very recently, in the case of the ENHANCE trial, it was these media that publicised the delay in the announcement of the study's results.

For many colleagues, and mainly those whose careers are bound up with senior administrative positions, access to continual and manifold information is particularly essential. Of course, high-quality medical journals will continue to form the backbone of our information sources: I would never claim anything else. However, we must recognise that the wide-ranging and penetrating analyses provided by reliable non-medical media should by no means be spurned.