

## POLICY & PRACTICE

### Accused Doctor Ends Practice

North Carolina developmental pediatrician Melvin Levine has signed a consent order that forbids him to practice medicine ever again, anywhere. The outcome followed an investigation in which Dr. Levine was accused of performing genital examinations that were not medically indicated on five patients and were documented improperly or not at all in medical records. If a hearing had been held, the consent order said, Dr. Levine was prepared to show that the physical exams in question, as well as neurologic exams, were appropriate and consistent with standard medical practice. The legal action will allow Dr. Levine to continue writing and lecturing in the field of learning disabilities.

### CT Safe Practices Urged

Computed tomography operators should employ techniques that reduce youngsters' exposure to ionizing radiation, the National Quality Forum said. The recommendation was included as 1 of 34 recommendations in the membership organization's Safe Practices for Better Healthcare—2009 report, being showcased in a year-long Webinar series. The Forum noted that up to 7 million CT scans are performed on children annually in the United States (11% of the total) and estimated that the number of scans of children increases about 10% per year. This is the first time the NQF, with members including the American College of Radiology, has addressed pediatric imaging in its annual report focusing on patient-safety practices.

### REAL Act Introduced

Congress is considering legislation that would authorize federal funding for comprehensive and medically accurate sexual education. The Responsible Education About Life (REAL) Act, introduced by Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.) and Rep. Barbara Lee (D-Calif.), would establish the first grant program for comprehensive sex education. Programs funded would be age appropriate, medically accurate, and inclusive of both contraception and abstinence information. Currently, federal funding is available only for sex-ed programs that exclusively promote abstinence before marriage—programs that opponents contend are unrealistically short on information about contraception and sexually transmitted diseases.

### FDA Launches SAFEKIDS

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced agreements with five clinical partners to study the effects of anesthetics and sedatives on the neurocognitive development of infants and young children. The Safety of Key Inhaled and Intravenous Drugs in Pediatrics Initiative (SAFEKIDS) is a multiyear project designed to address major gaps in scientific knowledge on the topic. The International Anesthesia Research Society will oversee SAFEKIDS and the FDA announced that the following institutions will par-

ticipate: Children's Hospital at Harvard Medical School, Boston; Arkansas Children's Hospital Research Institute in Little Rock; Columbia University in New York; and the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. "The long-term benefits of these studies will inform risk-benefit decisions that both anesthesiologists and parents must make when considering the choice of anesthesia in pediatric patients," said FDA Acting Commissioner Dr. Frank Torti in a statement.

### Parents Give Bed-Sharing Reasons

Many parents believe that benefits of bed sharing outweigh concerns and warnings, including those from the American Academy of Pediatrics, according to a University of Pittsburgh study published in *Academic Pediatrics*. Researchers interviewed 28 caregivers who regularly sleep in the same bed with children. The adults contended that bed sharing allowed both parent and child to sleep better, noted the convenience of tending to a baby's needs without getting up, said they found comfort in the tradition of bed sharing, and re-

ported a strong sense of bonding with their children. Contrary to evidence that bed sharing is dangerous, most caregivers reported believing that it protects their babies, and some identified it as a form of prevention against SIDS, saying they would know immediately if their babies were to stop breathing. "These findings should give physicians a better idea of the reasons behind bed sharing, allowing them to offer more customized advice on the subject," said Dr. Judy Chang, senior author on the study, in a statement.

—Jane Anderson

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