

ence reflects their primary goal — to determine whether a given behavior is lawful or likely to capture the attention of regulators and prosecutors. From this vantage point, they see no need for an absolute ban on gifts when so many physicians accept them, making this behavior a standard of practice. They also point out that several medical societies do not ban gifts and that regulators tolerate gifts that are “modest” (though little guidance is provided on which gifts qualify as modest) and do not seem to carry an overt quid pro quo. According to the authors, if the ACP standards are met, the legal risk is “remote” and physicians — at least those who are not especially risk-averse — need not worry. In short, the behavior is acceptable as long as physicians will not face prosecution.

The discussion of physicians’ participation in speakers’ bureaus follows an identical pattern. The authors observe that participating in these activities has “come under fire.” The ABIM–IMAP task force recommended that physicians not serve as members because speakers’ bureaus are essentially marketing activities that turn medical professionals into company salesmen. But the authors note that no formal codes ban such activity and that the number of such presentations nearly tripled between 1998 and 2006. Thus, physicians should make certain that the company slides are accurate and that the level of compensation represents “fair market payment.” Once again, however, the law, and not a standard of professionalism, shapes the advice.

The authors conclude by urging organizations to design and enforce compliance plans and to train members to avoid legal liability. Everyone should make certain, to use regulatory language, that physicians remain within “safe harbors.” Are such strategies sufficient to address the problem of conflict of interest? Probably not. There is too much writing on the wall in the form of new initiatives from government, industry, and academic medical centers that promote not only disclosure but also transparency. There are also legislative efforts at both state and federal levels that are designed to curtail the largesse of industry. In the final analysis, the manual’s overarching goal is to help physicians figure out how to comply with present statutes — not how to get ahead of the curve. Had its authors given more weight to the principles of professionalism in-

stead of to regulations, they might have made a more noteworthy contribution.

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**THE WISDOM OF WHORES:  
BUREAUCRATS, BROTHELS,  
AND THE BUSINESS OF AIDS**

By Elizabeth Pisani. 372 pp. New York, W.W. Norton, 2008.  
\$25.95. ISBN 978-0-393-06662-3.

**T**HE WISDOM OF WHORES IS AN ENGAGING ACCOUNT of the author’s journey through a wide range of positions on the epidemic of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection and AIDS — and a critique of the many things that have gone wrong in the global battle against the epidemic. To her credit, Pisani is candid about her own contributions to many misguided practices, such as the tendency of international agencies — the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), in particular — to “beat up” the numbers of estimated infections to make a case for the use of financial resources that otherwise would never have been committed to a public health issue whose effect is felt most strongly in the developing world.

Pisani is willing to take on what she views as bad science, political correctness, and sacred cows. She freely criticizes accepted truths about HIV, from the inflated estimations of the number of infections to social factors that shape the epidemic. Also under scrutiny are the effectiveness of peer education and the importance of involving people with HIV infection in educational efforts. As alternatives, Pisani offers her own faith in science and an epidemiologist’s straightforward understanding of the behavioral facts of the transmission of HIV through highly specific sexual and drug-injecting practices.

Yet her faith in science poses its own problems, since science is by its nature a far more contested terrain than Pisani acknowledges, and the behaviors that open the door for HIV infection are often shaped by many of the social factors she seems to dismiss. It is easy to sympathize with Pisani’s frustration at the ways in

which the reality of the epidemic has been obscured by the stories that have been told about it, as well as the ways in which these stories have drawn attention from the realities of the sexual and drug-using behaviors that are involved in the transmission of HIV. Yet many of the supposed myths that Pisani dismisses, such as the importance of poverty and inequality between the sexes, have been clearly demonstrated in the literatures of both epidemiology and the social sciences to influence risk behaviors in profound ways in a wide array of social settings.

The greatest strength of *The Wisdom of Whores*, and a quality that should make this book required reading for anyone who works on HIV and AIDS or in the broad field of global public health, is Pisani's exceptional honesty about the nuts and bolts of surveillance research in public health and about the importance of understanding sexual and drug-using practices if we are to develop prevention and treatment programs that really meet the needs of those who are at risk. This focus on local realities may not be sufficient to answer the apparent political need for a meta-narrative or an overarching explanation of the global epidemic, but Pisani reminds her readers that the real work of fighting the epidemic is done in these highly specific trenches of sex and drug use. It is a take-home message that is worth remembering.

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## NOTICES

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### 19TH IAGG WORLD CONGRESS OF GERONTOLOGY & GERIATRICS

The congress will be held in Paris, July 5–9.

Contact the 19th IAGG World Congress of Gerontology & Geriatrics Organizing Secretariat, International Congress and Events Organizers, 6 Avenue E. Van Nieuwenhuysse, 1160 Brussels, Belgium; or call (32) 2 779 59 59; or fax (32) 2 779 59 60; or e-mail [info@gerontologyparis2009.com](mailto:info@gerontologyparis2009.com); or see <http://www.icio.be> or <http://www.gerontologyparis2009.com>.

### IMMUNE TOLERANCE IN CANCER AND AUTOIMMUNE DISEASE

The conference will be held in Antigua, May 6–9.

Contact Katie Sedat, Abcam Inc., 1 Kendall Square, Suite 341, Cambridge, MA 02139; or call (617) 577-4263; or see <http://www.abcam.com/cancerimmunology>; or e-mail [ks@abcam.com](mailto:ks@abcam.com).

### 3RD INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON CANCER METASTASIS AND THE LYMPHOVASCULAR SYSTEM: BASIS FOR RATIONAL THERAPY

The symposium will be held in San Francisco, May 6–9. It is sponsored by the University of California, San Francisco.

Contact Dawn Bohlmann, University of California, San Francisco, 3333 California St., Suite 450, San Francisco, CA 94118; or call (415) 476-6127; or fax (415) 476-0318; or e-mail [bohlmann@ocme.ucsf.edu](mailto:bohlmann@ocme.ucsf.edu).

### 23RD EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON PHILOSOPHY OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH CARE

The conference, entitled "Sources and Perspectives of Bioethics," will be held in Tübingen, Germany, Aug. 19–22. It is jointly presented by the European Society for Philosophy of Medicine and Healthcare, the Institute for Ethics and History of Medicine, and the Interdepartmental Centre for Ethics in the Sciences and Humanities, University of Tübingen.

Contact Dr. Bert Gordijn, Dept. of Ethics, Philosophy and History of Medicine, Radboud University Nijmegen Medical Centre, P.O. Box 9101, 6500 HB Nijmegen, the Netherlands; or e-mail [b.gordijn@efg.umcn.nl](mailto:b.gordijn@efg.umcn.nl).

### MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS RESOURCE

The Web site offers free downloads of widely used clinical instruments for assessing disability in people with multiple sclerosis. The Web site is currently available at <http://www.nmss.org/Clinical%20Study%20Measures.asp>.

Contact National Multiple Sclerosis Society, 733 Third Ave., New York, NY 10017-3288; or call (800) 344-4867 (national) or (212) 986-3240 (NY); or fax (212) 986-7981; or e-mail [nat@nmss.org](mailto:nat@nmss.org); or see <http://www.nmss.org>.

### ASTHMA AND ALLERGY FOUNDATION OF AMERICA

The AAFA is offering free educational materials to patients and health care professionals. The AAFA provides programs and services designed to strengthen the partnership between health care provider and patient.

Contact Mike Tringale, Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, 1233 20th St., NW, Suite 402, Washington, DC 20036; or call (800) 7-ASTHMA (national) or (202) 466-7643, extension 272 (Washington, DC); or fax (202) 466-8940; or e-mail [mike@aafa.org](mailto:mike@aafa.org); or see <http://www.aafa.org>.

### PROGRAM IN PALLIATIVE CARE EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

The program will be held in Cambridge, MA, May 5–12 and Nov. 11–17.

Contact Venus Watson, HMS Center for Palliative Care, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, 44 Binney St., SW 411, Boston, MA 02115; or call (617) 582-8871; or fax (617) 632-6180; or e-mail [venus\\_watson@dfci.harvard.edu](mailto:venus_watson@dfci.harvard.edu); or see <http://www.hms.harvard.edu/cdi/pallcare>.

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