



**MOM Gets a Makeover**

Congratulations on the newly redesigned issue of *Medicine on the Midway*. I found it engaging and interesting, particularly the emergency room article and photos. It's a terrific representation of the university for alumni and supporters. I'm sure that they will have nothing but praise for this "souped-up" version of an old favorite. The use of four-color really gives the piece energy and the photography is compelling.

*Brian Quirke  
Homewood, IL*

As a publication buff and former director of publications at a major New York medical center, I love your redesigned magazine. It looks great and the features are equally impressive. Congrats!

*Bill Mishkin  
New York, NY*

Great looking magazine. Very clean lines and enticing design. Bravo!

*Jeff Worley  
Lexington, KY*

**Life in the ER**

I came across *Medicine on the Midway* and your cover story on "Life in the ER." I'm glad to hear that UCH will be making residents' hours more reasonable. Great job in the story! I'm impressed.

*Sarah Yang  
Berkeley, CA*

I wanted to compliment you on the article you did about life in the emergency department. It was a good depiction of how many emergency departments try to meet the challenges of both acute medical problems, which are unscheduled, and trying to do this in a busy system where hospital beds can be difficult to find for many hours. The use of humor and light-heartedness can be both necessary at times and perhaps the most professional of all qualities that make patient care under such circumstances human.

Congratulations on good insight and thanks for your willingness to spend time in our part of the world.

*Terry Vanden Hoek, MD  
Assistant Professor and  
Attending Physician  
Emergency Medicine  
University of Chicago*

People who watch TV shows about emergency care are bombarded with images of gurneys ramming through swinging doors, physicians shouting orders and bleeding patients writhing in pain. There are certainly moments like that — for example, UCH handles about 700 pediatric trauma cases a year, half of which require hospitalization. But this evening, like most evenings, consists instead of a relatively quiet yet utterly relentless parade of patients with ailments much less apparent than those produced by a bullet wound or car crash, but often just as severe.

*"Life in the ER" by John Easton  
Medicine on the Midway  
Fall 2002*

I am an 18-year experienced RN at the University of Chicago Hospitals, and I confess to watching "ER," and the "Hollywood fluff" depiction of nurses was understood. I then read the article in your magazine, *Medicine on the Midway*, and was saddened and offended by its contents.

What a fantastic, golden opportunity to educate medical students, residents, attendings and professors to the reality of emergency medicine; to stress the importance of a diverse and strong medical knowledge base for rapid medical decisions, collaboratively made by the physicians and nurses... [all of which] was patronizingly wasted!

*Anne Walsh, RN  
University of Chicago*

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**Editor**

Catherine Gianaro

**Contributing Editors**

John Easton  
Tom Hallman  
Judy Bolyard Purdy

**Contributing Writers**

Yudhijit Bhattacharjee  
Steve Koppes  
Susan Soric  
Jeff Wilson

**Designer**

Words&Pictures, Inc.

**Print Production**

Darwill

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**Address correspondence to:**

Editor, *Medicine on the Midway*  
University of Chicago  
Room L-609, MC 6063  
5841 South Maryland Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60637-1470

**Telephone:** 773-702-6241

**Facsimile:** 773-702-3171

**E-mail editor:** momedit@uchospitals.edu

**E-mail class news:**

alumni@mcdmail.uchicago.edu

**On the Web:**

<http://www.uchospitals.edu/midway>

The universal and eternal human drive is to have a better life. This drive is not unique to humans. A product of evolution, it is encoded in the genes of all living things. Organisms with more of the drive are better equipped to survive and pass on their genes than those with less of it. In our species, this fundamental drive motivates us to work, to find friends and lovers, to have children, and to dream about grander and better things for ourselves and those we care about. Call this selfishness if you will. While it may seem distasteful to some, being selfish is a crucial quality that has ensured the survival of our species to this point.

*"Stem Cell Research" by Bruce Lahn  
Medicine on the Midway  
Fall 2002*

**Stem Cell Research**

The new look of *Medicine on the Midway* is a laudable enhancement, but I found Bruce Lahn's Perspective article ("Stem Cell Research: Separating Eternal Human Drive from Contemporary Cultural Fashion") very disappointing.

With all due respect to Professor Lahn, his writing makes clear that he is a scientist, not an ethicist or a philosopher, nor is he particularly well informed about the relevant moral and philosophical issues at the heart of the stem cell debate. Scientists need to be conversant with all dimensions of the debate in order to avoid the naïve oversimplifications that make their arguments lose credibility among those with broader training and insight.

For the record, I support the carefully considered application of embryonic stem cells for some types of biomedical research. I am a hematologist-oncologist and witness the aching need for research advances every day in the consultation room. But that

doesn't mean this research should be done at all costs or without due reflection. Rather, it can only be done after due consideration of the unique status of the human embryo, whether one believes that this status is ordained by a Higher Power or conveyed by broad social consensus. If the debate is framed merely in terms of passing "cultural fashions" which can become quickly passé, then human culture is in danger of passing a critical point of degeneracy.

Lahn compares contemporary concern over stem cell research to views expressed in the 1970s that the first "test-tube baby" was an "ungodly intervention with nature."

A much more accurate analogy would have been to the contemporary debate over abortion, another murky moral issue that hinges on the precise stage-dependent status of the human embryo. Controversy over abortion has been raging for decades and shows no signs of abating.

Lahn is simply wrong to say, "opposition to stem cell research is restricted largely to Christians." Christians

hold diverse viewpoints on embryonic stem cell issues, and objections to certain forms of research are widely held in other religious (and secular) quarters, including the Judaism that Lahn cites as having a mandate for embryonic stem cell research. Compare the writings of Rabbi J. David Bleich and Rabbi Unterman on the status of less-than-40-day-old fetuses to the testimony given to the National Bioethics Advisory Committee and cited by Lahn. Respect for human integrity is not unique to one value system nor to those who consider themselves religious.

Hopefully respect and the duty to protect our fellow humans from exploitation — especially the weakest and most voiceless among us — is not merely a passing fancy. The key question should not be how we can convince the ignorant and silence their "commotion" over stem cells so we can get back to work, but rather what an embryo actually is and what exactly that means about it.

*David Steensma, MD '96  
Oxford, England*