

who report that viruses can be used to target and kill cells lacking the tumor suppressor gene, p53, by introducing DNA of unusual structure into these cells, thus inducing them to undergo programmed cell death. Cancer cells commonly lack p53.

One final study is of interest to bioethics given the link between population control and reproductive technologies. Lutz, et al. (*Nature*, Vol. 412, No. 6846) predict that it is likely that global population growth will plateau by the end of the twenty-first century. In fact, they conclude that there is a 15% probability that there will be *fewer* people in A.D. 2100 than there are today!

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MEDICINE

Medical journal articles reviewed for this issue of the *Quarterly* make some important contributions in the areas of public health and women's health. These include a new recognition that regular aspirin use is associated with a reduction in death from any cause during a median follow-up of just over three years (Gum, et al., *JAMA* Vol. 286, No. 12); benefit of DTP and MMR vaccines in children far outweighs the morbidity from febrile seizures that may occur in rare cases (Barlow, et al., *NEJM*, Vol. 345, No. 9); and a report that colonoscopy is an effective one-time screening test for colorectal cancer (Lieberman and Weiss, *NEJM*, Vol. 355, No. 8).

The tobacco industry continues to reach young people via magazine advertising three years after the 1999 Master Settlement Agreement (King and Siegel, *NEJM*, Vol. 345, No. 7); a simple blood test may provide a new method for determining which persons would benefit most from statin drugs to prevent heart attacks (Ridker, et al., *NEJM*, Vol. 344, No. 26); patients, like Vice President Cheney, with a history of life-threatening heart arrhythmia treated with drugs or implantable defibrillators should be allowed to drive (Akiyama, et al., *NEJM*, Vol. 345, No. 6); and umbilical cord blood is a feasible source of stem cells to replace bone marrow destroyed by chemotherapy or radiation (Laughlin, et al., *NEJM*, Vol. 344, No. 24).

An alarming analysis of the current hepatitis C virus infection yields an estimate of 2.7 million chronically infected persons in the United States with 38,000 cases of acute infection per year. Greater than 70% of these acute cases will eventually become chronic. There is no available prophylaxis and no vaccine is likely to be available soon (Lauer, et al., *NEJM*, Vol. 345, No. 1).

In the field of women's health: hormone replacement therapy leads to increases in bone density in the lumbar spine and hip after a mere nine months of treatment in women aged seventy-five or older (Villareal, et al., *JAMA*, Vol. 286, No. 7); women with genetic susceptibility to breast cancer did not develop breast cancer within three years of prophylactic mastectomy (Meijers-Heijbor, et al., *NEJM*, Vol. 345, No. 3); pregnant women with a history of prior C-section face increased risk of uterine rupture when vaginal delivery is attempted, especially if labor is induced (Lydon-Rochelle, et al., *NEJM*, Vol. 345, No. 1).

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