



## EDITORIAL

# Perspectives on this issue of the IJS

The content of this issue represents an accurate reflection of the global and multidisciplinary outlook of the IJS. Firstly, the editorial by Donaldson on the "the search for safer surgery" provides an interesting perspective on the WHO World Alliance for Patient Safety. Donaldson goes on to discuss specific elements of the WHO's vision, such as how lessons from surgical errors can be distributed to the global surgical community. In order to understand how surgery can be made 'safer', we must understand the nature and characteristics of surgical errors. The review article by Sarker and Vincent on precisely this subject goes some way towards improving our understanding. We must also remember that surgical errors cannot be viewed in isolation; we must take into account the nature of surgical training and the development of future surgeons. Rosin provides an interesting perspective in his editorial "surgical training at the crossroads", this is further supported by Khan et al. in their review article "the need for technical skills assessment" and by us and colleagues in a review article detailing changes in surgical teaching at the undergraduate level.

Animal experimentation has been a major issue for the global scientific community for some time now. Events at Huntington Life Sciences and elsewhere have led many universities and private companies to boost security at sites where animal experimentation takes place. Recently in the UK, a panel of experts brought together by the Nuffield Council on Bioethics recommended that the Home Office must make available information relating to the degree and length of suffering experienced by animals involved in scientific research<sup>1</sup>

(approximately 2.72 million in 2003). In a recent twist, shares in British drugs firm Phytopharm slumped by nearly 22% as investors feared fresh attacks from animal rights activists following the discovery of an incendiary device planted under the car of one of the company's directors.<sup>2</sup> Amongst this publicity, it is important not to lose sight of the benefits that animal experimentation has provided us, especially as surgery is one of the key benefactors, with this in mind the editorial by Rothwell et al. provides a great overview.

The Tsunami of 26th December 2004 was a major catastrophe affecting many countries in South East Asia and causing approximately 300,000 deaths. Sooriakumaran provides a stark assessment in his editorial, detailing the broad range of immediate, short- and long-term problems encountered by civilians and health care teams dealing with a major disaster. Insights gathered from field reports are discussed and these provide the wider surgical community with an interesting set of lessons to reflect on.

## References

1. Brettingham M. Committee calls for more guidance on animal experiments. *BMJ* 2005;**330**:1226.
2. *Animal-rights blow for drugs firm*. BBC News UK edition. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/4122984.stm> [accessed 23.6.05].

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