

# Shifting Dullness

December, 1995



## Inside this edematous issue:

- Another steamy yet insightful Effusion (p. 2)
- Mednotes? Here? Hmm... (p. 7)
- Can Ard possibly still be on the ward? (p. 6)
- An ad for the bookstore (p. 10)

# Plural Effusions

Jeff Drayer

He arrived by helicopter in a driving rain, and the crash cart team which met him unloaded and wheeled him through the fog into the emergency room. He was rushed into room one where, at the count of three, he was lifted onto the bed, an IV already started. "Car crash!" I heard somebody yell as a unit of plasma was hung. As doctors, nurses and technicians raced in and out of the room, some shouting orders and others following them, I could feel the muscles in my neck and shoulders begin to tense. I watched the flurry of activity before me and felt as if I should help somehow, but knew immediately that I couldn't. But I could still feel the pressure in the room, the line separating life and death hanging low in the air, threatening at any time to cross over the body of the patient who now lay untouched by human hands as the paddles, charged to 300, were applied. Unsuccessful, they were recharged, and this time were answered by a beat. There was a sweaty sense of relief, and I could feel my own heartbeat calm down again. The patient was safe, at least for now.

I turned off the TV in the sixth floor lounge, glad that everything at County General was once again under control and marvelling at what a fine doctor Noah Wylie's character was going to become some day. I took the elevator down, navigated through the maze of white corridors, and came once again to the Duke ER, where I was on pediatrics call. Sure enough, the kid with the otitis media "emergency" that I had seen two hours ago was still in room 21, asleep and waiting to leave. I popped a Claritin tablet into my mouth and sat down to wait for something, preferably non-renally related, to hap-

pen, when suddenly my resident came rushing up to me. "Hey Jeff," he said in a voice I imagined was almost breathless. Just as it had upstairs, my pulse again quickened. "I've got a kid over in 18. I need you to get over there," I was already standing up and grabbing my bag, ready for action. "To watch him to see whether he vomits," he concluded. I put my bag down again. "Give him an hour. If nothing comes out you can send him home." I sulked over to room 18, chose

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**Based upon my dislike of drool, and really, fluids in general, I had never expected to enjoy pediatrics. I figured I'd put in my time, get my rotavirus, and be done with it.**

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a chair a good fifteen feet from the kid, and sat down to begin my vigil. I stared at the kid. He stared back. I wondered what Carter would do in a situation like this, but realized that he'd be too busy doing radical stomach resections or something to get himself into such a bland situation in the first place. My mind began to wander. Based upon my dislike of drool, and really, fluids in general, I had never expected to enjoy pediatrics. I figured I'd put in my time, get my rotavirus, and be done with it. But as I watched the kid in front of me turn a slightly darker shade of green, I reflected that it hadn't been all bad. There were those happy-go-lucky

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## EDITORS

Jamy Ard  
Matt Hep  
Edward M

## STAFF

Crystal E  
Greg Del  
Michael I  
Allison E  
Chris Gar  
Orel Hers  
Umesh M  
Sande M

clinic days spent beating kids with congenital heart defects in Ms. PacMan. There was the Halloween Fair which, even though I was told in no uncertain terms that I could not dress up as a worm load, ended up supplying me with enough free plastic spiders for a week. And, of course, I had thoroughly enjoyed the dermatology clinic, even though I found out later on

*There was the Halloween Fair which, even though I was told in no uncertain terms that I could not dress up as a worm load, ended up supplying me with enough free plastic spiders for a week.*

that the "D" on my schedule had actually stood for diabetes. I smiled, an expression that was answered fifteen feet away by a grimace of nausea and dismay. But to tell the truth, with

these happy memories fresh in my head, I didn't even mind.

Sure, I thought, Carter and Dr. Ross have their little basketball hoop out in the alley behind the hospital. But I play ball in the East Campus gym every Sunday morning with all the peds residents. And when I'm on call till midnight, I get three, maybe four free dinners in the cafeteria, some of them involving food. Maybe real life, I thought, actually is better than television after all. Maybe having real experiences is more valuable than living them vicariously through people who are paid to pretend to have them. And maybe the satisfaction one can derive from accomplishing or failing something by himself far outweighs what he can get by passively watching another. I looked back at my patient, yellowish drool running down the side of his pale, sunken cheek. Twenty-five more minutes to go. I hoped I had remembered to set my VCR to tape Friends. ■

# Shifting Dullness

## EDITORS

Jamy Ard  
Matt Hepburn  
Edward Norris

Jeff Drayer  
Mike Morowitz  
Tanya Wahl

## STAFF

Crystal Bernstein  
Greg Della Rocca  
Michael DiCuccio  
Allison Evanoff  
Chris Gamard  
Orel Hershiser  
Umesh Marathe  
Sande Merchant

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Shifting Dullness  
Duke University Medical Center  
P.O. Box 2865  
Durham, NC 27710

Any and all submissions are welcome and need only be placed in the "Shifting Dullness Box" located underneath the candy shelf in the Deans' Office.

# AMWA goes to Seattle

by Becke White

From November 1-5, Becke White, Tanya Wahl, Cathy Pascoe Kaminetzky, Wendy White, Joanne Jenkins, and Sara Larson Clay attended the national meeting of the American Medical Women's Association in Seattle, Washington. The meeting featured nationally renowned speakers on women's health issues as well as seminars and workshops on career development, medical education, and other professional issues. A panel of Duke physicians presented a workshop on HIV/AIDS in women, and one of the featured speakers at the plenary session was Sarah Weddington, the attorney who argued Roe v. Wade. Additional sessions focused on cardiovascular disease, tobacco, breast cancer, abortion, and international health efforts. Dr. Diana Dell, an Ob/Gyn here at Duke presently taking a psychiatry residency at UNC/Chapel Hill was the president of AMWA this year, and completed her term at the meeting. There were numerous opportunities to network with the over 500 physicians and medical students from all over the country; plus, Tanya, who is a native of Seattle, was able to fill free moments as a tour guide to all the best restaurants, bars and shopping in town.

The trip was made possible by generous contributions from the Departments of Anesthesiology, Medicine, Ophthalmology and Obstetrics and Gynecology; the Medical Alumni Association; Graduate and Professional Student Council; Dean Blazer and the Office of Medical Education; Dean Kredich; Dean Pounds; Dr. Tana Grady; Dr. Louise Markert; and Dr. Bernadette Page. Thank you all for your support! ■

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## MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!!

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1996 Student/Faculty Show

● **Saturday, March 23, 1996** ●

Auditions: January 9-11, 1996,  
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everyone welcome,  
no talent necessary!

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### Attention all aspiring artists:

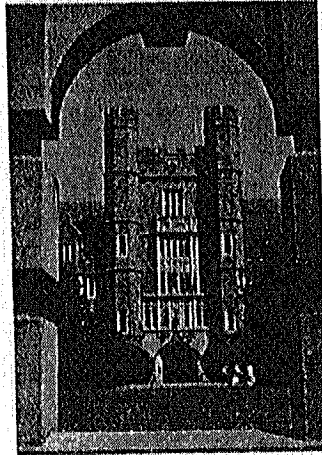
Designs are now being accepted for the Student/Faculty Show t-shirts, programs, posters and tickets. All artwork should be "camera-ready" and limited to no more than 3 colors: size can easily be adapted. The title of the show is "Jill and Fred's Medical Adventure" (you know, Bill and Ted's ...?) The artists of all selected designs will receive free t-shirts, tickets to the show and appropriate fame and recognition. Please submit artwork to Linda Chambers by December 22. Call Becke White at 309-9274 or e-mail RRW1@acpub.duke.edu with questions or ideas.



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# On the Ward

with Ard

I decided that I might as well get my money's worth. Tuition was climbing again, and they had the nerve to give us a holiday. I had paid for the time and felt determined to take full advantage of it, holiday or not. Who needed two entire weeks off? Just give me one night off, and I am ready to go.

It was the night before Christmas, and I found myself in the hospital, waiting to learn some surgery. It could be a long wait, but I was ready to go. There was a case scheduled to begin pretty late that night, somewhere around 10:00. I figured that I could check in with the OR scrub nurse and discuss some key points before the case. We chatted a while about my glove size and what that implied, as well as who the surgeon for

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**Thinking on your feet is something that every medical student should be able to do. However, if you want to separate yourself from the crowd, sleeping on your feet is the way to go. This was just another OR technique that I had perfected.**

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tonight's case would be. I delighted in the fact that Dr. Ndersonay would be the lead guy on this one. I had not yet had the opportunity to hold hook for him. The pleasure would be all mine.

This case was scheduled to be a three hours, so I thought it would be in my best interest to grab some nourishment beforehand. So I strolled into the what was then the Red Eye (now

the Night Owl), and beheld the glorious feast of traditional Christmas trimmings. Turkey, stuffing, greens, yams, gravy, cakes, and pies of all varieties—all for the taking. I thought to myself as I began to eat, look at what my classmates are missing. Pity.

Well, dinner ended and I proceeded back to the OR to scrub. Dr. Ndersonay was there, looking a bit more jolly than usual, but I figured that maybe even surgeons can get into the holiday mood. It was slightly after entering the cool atmosphere of the OR coupled with the fact that I stuffed myself at dinner, that I began feeling sleepy. However, this was to be an exciting case, and the adrenaline soon began to flow. I assumed my standard OR position—somewhere near the foot of the patient; just far away not really to see much, but close enough to grab a retractor. I had perfected my skill and obviously all of my hard work and studying was paying off. I looked simply put—impressive.

After about 20 minutes of the case, that sleepy feeling crept back. The room was quiet and no one was stirring. Dr. Ndersonay worked deftly and said little to those around him. Visions of doing anything else but this danced in my head while I found myself drifting off to sleep. Thinking on your feet is something that every medical student should be able to do. However, if you want to separate yourself from the crowd, sleeping on your feet is the way to go. This was just another OR technique that I had perfected. All of a sudden, I awoke to such a clatter, loud and clanging it arose. Could it be that I heard sleigh bells? Had Santa Claus actually come to Duke North?

As I surveyed the room, I saw that this

**Continued on page 7**  
Shifting Dullness

## I M P O ANNOUN

Coming in January  
**King, Jr.**  
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The symposium will  
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**Edward**

from East Carolina

Fulfill the dream  
Community Service  
organizations will  
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# IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS! IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS!

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Coming in January--*The Martin Luther King, Jr. Symposium and Community Service Fair*

**"Remembering the Legacy:  
Reaching Back to Move Ahead"**

The symposium will feature the uplifting and motivational speaker

**Edward Treadwell, M.D.**

from East Carolina University School of Medicine

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**January 11, 1996 at 2:00 P.M.**

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Saturday evening,  
January 13, 1996 beginning  
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**Shifting Dullness**

melodious sound was not originating from bells of a sleigh; however, someone had taken a nap while holding a retractor and let it fall to the floor. I looked at Dr. Ndersonay's eyes to see how far away I needed to distance myself from this unfortunate resident. But, I was quite surprised to see him chuckling with a holiday fervor that made his belly shake like a bowl of jelly. Gosh, I thought, maybe he really is in the holiday spirit.

The remainder of the case went without a hitch, and Dr. Ndersonay even spoke to me about my plans for the remainder of the holiday. He even correctly guessed what I wanted: a life-sized poster of Dr. David C. Sabiston for my wall. As we cleaned up the patient, he broke out with a spirited carol that shocked the groggy patient; however, we all joined in with the song. And as suddenly as he had entered, he disappeared down the hall, shouting "Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night." I looked in disbelief, but I still wonder—could it really be? ■

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There once were wise Editors Three  
Working on an issue-to-be

There was some space left to sell  
But they said, "What the hell!  
Let's write Happy Holidays from Shifting D!"

Hope y'all have a good break. Remember to drive safely, be careful, eat your peas, wear a hat when you go outside, never talk to strangers, get Drayer something nice for Channukah, look both ways before crossing the street, covertly scheme to dominate the hemisphere, always say "please" and "thank you," and of course, enjoy your holidays. See you in 1996.

## **MEDNOTES**

Sande Merchant

It's Monday and I've got mednotes today

But I can't do them now, I need time to play.

I can put them off, "Yes!" I say.

Noone really reads them anyway.

I've got mednotes to do from yesterday

I'll get the tape! Now that's the way.  
But why be frantic the test is not for two weeks!

I'll give it a few days and then I'll freak.

Now Thursday is here and I've got the tape

but my muscles are sore and I've got a crick in my nape.

And with Seinfeld, Friends, and yes, E.R.,

then meeting the guys down at the bar,

I don't have time; I'll put it off one more day.

My classmates will understand, I need more time to play!

So one week has passed and I've

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**Continued on Page 8**

 7



*(Mednotes, continued)*

shirked my duty.  
If I don't hurry up I'll get a kick in the  
booty.

My Mac's on the fritz,  
the computer lab's locked.  
And to make matters worse I've got  
writer's block!  
The notes will keep at least one more  
day.  
No matter, who reads them any-  
way?

Oh no, today's Wednesday and the  
test is so near!  
I'm in a jam, I've made an error,  
I fear.  
I really must study and my priorities  
are all wrong,  
and calls for the tape comprise a list  
that's quite long.

How did this happen? I had plenty  
of time .  
Now I've got so much else on my  
mind.  
Sorry my friends, I have nothing to  
say.  
but those notes will have to wait just  
one more day.

Shall I do them on Thursday and get

it over?

But to have them typed in time I'll  
need a 4-leaf clover!  
Friday's the day and since I'm in  
such a rush  
I won't bother to type them; that's  
such a fuss.  
I'll simply write them by hand, nice  
and neat  
and take them to Kinko's and get  
copies made cheap.

Saturday morning I'll take them to  
school.

And with the joke at the end every-  
one will think they're real cool.

Now I've done my duty and finished  
my notes.

I even jazzed them up with some  
quippy little quotes.  
They were a little smudged and a tad  
bit late.

But I got them in before the critical  
date.

My classmates are nice, noone will  
be pissed.

In fact I bet the notes weren't even  
missed.

Hey the test is over—why is every-  
one so grumpy

They're glaring at me and making



me jumpy.

What?! You couldn't read my notes,  
but I gave it my best,  
I slaved and I sweated and got not a  
lick of rest!

You mean you never got them?  
Sheesh, I don't know why.  
I broke my back to get them in on  
time.

Why pick on me, my notes weren't  
the worst

Y'all are carrying on like somebody's  
aneurysm just burst.

Besides, here's my logic, I thought it  
out this way,

Noone cares about the notes.

Who reads them anyway?

Well, I've got egg on my face and I'm  
eating crow.

The crowd is through with me and it  
was quite a row.

I've learned my lesson and won't fail  
you twice.

Y'all can be brutal; I think my eye  
needs some ice.

Next time around I'll be diligent and  
true.

I won't put the notes off 'til a week  
after they're due.

I'll type them up neatly so they are

easily read  
rather than scribbling them out as I  
recline in my bed.

Now you may not believe a word I  
speak

But be kind and this time turn the  
other cheek.

Next time will be different, different  
I say.

Because now I know y'all do read  
them, everyday. ■

### HELP WANTED

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**R.A. continued from p. 11**

anticipation, each person eyeing each other up, showing our bravest poker faces in an attempt to disguise our true goals. Suddenly, the doors opened. The scene that followed was too priceless to exaggerate.

A barter began, among people who hadn't yet approached the desk. In a scene more fit for the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, trades were made. Surgery for Derm. Radiology for Renal consults. MICU for anything at all. Someone dropping multiple classes had everyone's ears - truly a hot commodity.

Midway through the rally, the rumors were spilled. Radiology was full, with no hope of a space opening up. So was Dermatology. Derm's stock went high - thirteen people had signed up for one particular block. In a valiant show of insider trading, people were bartering class for class, section for section, before their appointed transactions had been made. Shouts came from the front - a spot in Derm opened, and everyone eyed each other hopefully. Who would get it? But, alas, it turned out to be just another rumor.

In the end, the ruckus died down. Housekeeping was called to clean up the mess of ticker tape and random bits of paper. Amid piles of wanton debris, a lone red-jacketed trader sat, obviously broken by the day's hectic activity. In the end, through skillful transactions, I was able to achieve my goal: two light classes just when I wanted them, allowing me plenty of boards study and travel time. In the end, most left satisfied, and all left with the required credits scheduled.

So, my friends, do not worry. Drop/add isn't really that painful, just time consuming. And, when your fourth year scheduling comes around, just remember this axiom: Aim low. It's fourth year, for God's sake. Take some easy classes, take some time off, climb a mountain or something. You deserve it. ■

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**R.A. continued from p.12**

potential courses I could fill my schedule with. Something in me said Take a Surgery course, and so, despite my better judgement, I put ENT and Plastics on the list. And all the courses I didn't get were still options, if they opened. But what about Renal consults? Pulmonary? Ophthalmology? Cardiology? GI consults? There were almost too many choices.

On the appointed day, I relieved myself from my all-important Sub-Internship duties, leaving my poor Vets hanging in the breeze. I walked into the Registrar's office, pushing back the massy door, and was greeted by . . .

. . . loneliness. A hot desert wind blew, momentarily ruffling my neatly pressed white coat. In front of me stood a ramshackle wooden shed, with a lone window and door. On all sides, stretching far into the distance, was sand and nothingness. Above, a vulture circled. A tin cup hung on a nail rattled in the breeze.

There was no one there.

Seeing a bell clearly labeled "For service, ring bell", I tapped once. Nothing. I tapped again and again. Finally, as the door opened and a matronly inhabitant approached, my sleep-deprivational hallucinosis cleared, and a cheery face greeted me. Wow, I thought, that VA Deli must be serving some truly outdated meat. "Can I help you, Mr. Roadside Assistance?"

"Why yes," I replied. "Can you tell me if Dermatology in block 42 is open?"

"I'm sorry, it's full."

Well, there went plan number one. "Okay, how about block 43? Block 44?"

"I'm sorry, they're all full."

This was disturbing. One class down - I would have to move Derm to the spring.

"How about the MICU - either Duke or VA?"

"Well, we had one opening at the VA in block 44, but the last person here claimed that. Sorry, they're all full."

"Okay, what about ENT?" "Full." "Office Gynecology?" "Full." "Renal consults?" "Full." "Advanced Podiatry?" "Full." "East Latvian Veterinary Medicine?" "Full." Fear was

beginning to win. My seemingly immense list was being whittled down in mere seconds.

Slowly, with deliberation, I looked the registrar straight in the eyes. "Lay it on me," I said, "is anything open?"

"Well, not momentarily," she replied. "But, hey, you've got a pager, I'll be sure to give you a ring if anything opens up."

Distraught, I left. My house of cards was collapsing before my eyes. My carefully planned spring - a spring in which I would have to take only two non-rotations, a spring in which much free time was to be made available - was slowly but surely disappearing.

After bumping randomly into people who were voluntarily dropping classes, I managed to get all but one of my desired rotations, but, unfortunately, not in their original order. Derm would need to wait until the spring. This would be no hassle - it would make a cushy spring schedule even cushier.

With this memory behind me - the memory of a day spent frantically searching for anyone dropping anything that sounded vaguely interesting or even familiar - it was with some trepidation that I approached the spring drop/add session. This time, however, I had more potential difficulties. I had a much stricter set of requirements: a total of six credits needed; courses must be taken at specific times, for reasons too complex to document; and, most importantly, the courses must be exceptionally light. Let's face it, for four years I've pushed and pushed, as we all have. Spring would be the last Rest Stop - even the last Exit - for miles to come.

Again, on the appointed day, I approached the registrar's office. This time, however, an altogether more frightening scene awaited me.

A line. But not just a line. An immense line. Well, okay, it was a small line, maybe thirty people, but that's twenty-nine more than were there in the fall. This was frightening.

And, what was worse, everyone wanted the same classes, at the same times. At least, so it seemed.

So, we hung out there, in nervous

**Continued on page 10**

# Shifting Dullness

Duke University  
P. O. Box 2865  
Durham, N.C. 27705

Dr. Jim Gifford  
Medical Center Archivist  
DUMC Box 3702

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## Drop/Add II: The Wrath of the Registrar

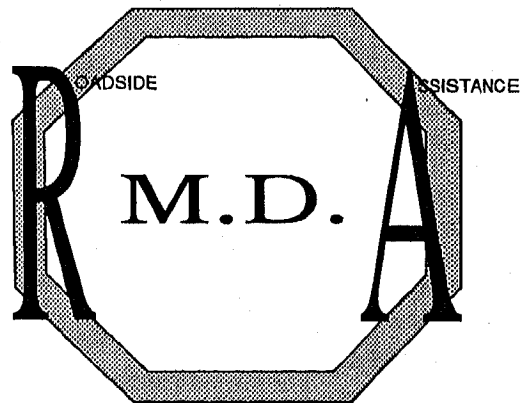
Coming home one fine afternoon, amid the normal pile of mail that awaits me and my three housemates, I discovered a small envelope from the Registrar's Office. This was a disturbing event, for it could mean only one thing.

I did not get the classes I wanted for the spring. Which, also, means only one thing.

I must go to Drop/Add.

All I could remember was visions of last fall's Drop/Add session. I had signed up for four stellar rotations - Radiology, MICU, Office Gynecology, and Dermatology. Lo and behold, I was informed that MICU, Office Gynecology, and Dermatology were oversubscribed, and I must choose again.

I had never had to go through Drop/Add



before, even as an undergraduate. I was panicked. Was it true I had to collect so many signatures, just to change one stinking class? Reading on, I see that there is a special day set aside, a day on which all faults will be overlooked. A day on which all is forgiven. A special day, on which you can drop or add wantonly, without a care. What joy.

As the day approached, I made a list of

**Continued on page 11**  
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