

panding its jurisdiction to activities that occur completely within a single state—small-scale research by an academic or a practicing physician testing an innovative therapy.

Many critical reforms recommended by blue-ribbon panels are conspicuously absent. These include reducing the redundancy of regulation of early-stage clinical trials and a binding reciprocity provision that, for example, would limit the duration of FDA review of a new drug to a maximum of, say, 60 days after its approval in the United Kingdom or by the European Medicines Evaluation Agency (thereafter, FDA would have to show cause why the drug should not be marketed in the United States, or it would automatically be approved).

Following Congress's failure to accomplish significant FDA reform, the costs of drug development (already averaging more than \$500 million to bring a single product to market) will continue to rise, fewer drugs will be developed, and market competition will erode. Patients will suffer higher prices and benefit from fewer breakthrough drugs.

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## Thumbs Down on Acupuncture

The U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) consensus statement on acupuncture (Random Samples, 14 Nov., p. 1231) should not prompt physicians to use acupuncture or to refer patients to acupuncturists.

The panel convened by the NIH, in fact, presented meager conclusions. It announced that there is "clear evidence that needle acupuncture is efficacious for adult postoperative and chemotherapy nausea and vomiting, and probably for the nausea of pregnancy," and that there was "evidence of efficacy for postoperative dental pain." It did not quantify the degree of "efficacy" of needle acupuncture in these conditions, or discuss its actual usefulness.

The nausea of some forms of chemotherapy is severe, but current medications used for its suppression are increasing highly effective and do not present major side effects. Why torment patients just emerging from surgery, or suffering from the effects of chemotherapy, with multiple and repeated needle insertion and manipulation?

The precise cause of nausea of pregnancy is enigmatic. The NIH statement qualified its comments on this point. It did not comment on hyperemesis gravidarum, the real problem, or the possible effects of painful

daily needling of pregnant women over a period of months.

"Postoperative dental pain" is well handled by the brief administration of minor analgesics, which presents minimal risk and is much to be preferred over 20-minute, painful needling.

The panel also points out "there are also studies that do not find efficacy for acupuncture in pain..." and that there is "evidence that acupuncture does not demonstrate efficacy for cessation of smoking and may not be efficacious for other conditions."

In short, it appears that the panel concluded that acupuncture was virtually useless, declared a "victory" as ordered up, and called for more research expenditure to heap on that already wasted.

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## Drug Abuse and Therapy

The special section "Frontiers in neuroscience: The science of substance abuse" (3 Oct., p. 45) highlights many of the exciting advances in this field. From molecular neu-

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