

## CORRESPONDENCE

### **The government must stop supporting irrational practices**

In the annual jamboree of irrationalists at Hyderabad on a day known as Mrigasira Karte (in 2005 it was on June 8) hundreds of thousands of people congregated to get the much-hyped "anti-asthma fishy medicine." Popularly known as "fish medicine" it has been given by the Bathini Gaud family as a wonder cure for asthma. Year after year there has been criticism of this public show of irrationality. This year was no different except that the Charminar Branch of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) tried to check this irrationality.

Demanding a ban on the practice of putting an unknown drug in the mouth of a fish and then shoving the live fish in the gullet of the patient to let it swim in gastric secretions till the human system took care of the live creature, the IMA said, "There is no evidence that the medication has given total relief to patients." It was reported that when tests were conducted on 150 patients who had taken the fish medicine last year, it was found that none of them was cured. Instead six of them developed throat infections and three got respiratory complications. The IMA also questioned the propriety of huge amounts of money and material spent by the government each year on this show. The government supplies lakhs of murrel fingerlinks and also makes other arrangements for this mela. Since the current chief minister of the state of Andhra Pradesh, Y S Rajasekhara Reddy, is

a medical doctor, it appealed that "he ought to know better".(1)

Since this plea did not work, the IMA decided to take the government to court for patronising an "unscientific" medicine (2). In spite of the controversy thousands of people gathered at the exhibition grounds in Hyderabad to get the medicine (3). They included the techno-savvy ex-chief minister, Chandrababu Naidu (4).

We have serious objections to the state being party to this irrational practice, one which has become an annual affair. It is not acceptable that the custodians of public money should injudiciously spend scarce financial resources for such unscientific activity.

**Vijay Thawani**, Associate Professor in Pharmacology, Government Medical College, Nagpur. **Manasvi Thawani**, Territory Sales Leader, American Express Services India Limited, Mumbai. 14-A, Jeevan Jyoti, Clarke Town, Nagpur 440 004 INDIA email: vijaythawani@rediffmail.com

### **References**

1. Times News Network. Asthma medicine fishy, say doctors. *Times of India*, Mumbai. 2005 May 28; 8 (col. 2-3).
2. IANS. IMA draws Andhra Govt to court on fish medicine. *The Hitavada*, Nagpur. 2005 May 31; 9 (col. 1-2).
3. IANS. Amidst row thousands queue up for fish medicine. *The Hitavada*, Nagpur. 2005 June 9; 8 (col. 4-6).
4. Bestonhealth.com [homepage on the Internet]. [cited 2005 Oct 23]. Available from: [http://bestonhealth.com/travel/india/health%20centers/fish\\_therapy/fish\\_therapy.asp?id=43](http://bestonhealth.com/travel/india/health%20centers/fish_therapy/fish_therapy.asp?id=43)