

## Conclusion

The AMA obviously takes most seriously any representations made on behalf of a reputable and expert body such as SPUMS. The purpose of the antecedent material is simply to ensure that SPUMS fully understands that there is another side to this debate. Perhaps you would care to contact the editor of Australian Medicine, the AMA's news magazine, to explore with her the possibility of writing an opinion piece on this matter for the magazine? That would be certain to stimulate discussion of it within the AMA. I should be happy to summarise the countervailing arguments for simultaneous publication.

I shall distribute copies of your letter and of this reply to all AMA Branches and members of Federal Council and invite their further comments on the matters raised. Formal dialogue between SPUMS and the AMA should at least allow both to be more aware of the other's views and the reasons for them.

Yours faithfully,  
Dr. P.S. Wilkins

Australian Medical Association Limited

*The above has been edited down from a letter, of four A4 pages, typed with single spacing, sent in response to the paper IS THE AMA REALLY INTERESTED IN PREVENTIVE MEDICINE? (SPUMS J 1992; 22 (4):203-206). The Editor's preliminary reply appears below.*

Dear Dr Wilkins,

Thank you for your letter of 13/1/93.

I enclose a photocopy of an article in the SPUMS Journal<sup>1</sup> which makes it quite clear that doctors without training in underwater medicine were not living up to your first quote from the AMA code of ethics. They were quite clearly outside their expertise.

This is not surprising as there is no discussion of underwater medicine in the undergraduate curriculum in most medical schools and is insufficient to prepare people to examine candidates for diving (one or two lectures) in the one or two that do include the topic.

SPUMS considers that a sports diver needs a diving medical before using compressed air but sees no need for regular medicals after that. SPUMS has no desire to restrict diving medicals to its members. In fact about half those who have done the necessary courses are not members of SPUMS. The whole exercise is to raise the standard of practice and protect prospective divers.

Unfortunately there **is** evidence from studies of diving deaths that "Some of these people have died as a result of this failure to assess them properly". It will take me some time to find and photocopy the cases and I wish to send this letter today before going to work. I will therefore write again when I have had the time to gather up-to-date information and references to answer your questions.

Most of the information you require is on file with Dr Darrell Wallner, the Secretary of SPUMS, of 114 Vasey Crescent, Campbell, ACT 2601.

I hope that before the end of 1993 we will be able to convince the AMA that SPUMS is only interested in promoting good standards of practice which will offer higher quality and safer service to diving candidates.

Dr John Knight  
Editor, SPUMS Journal

## Reference

- 1 Edmonds C. MMM, the Mickey Mouse medical. *SPUMS J* 1986; 16 (10); 3-4

6 Union Street  
Newcastle NSW 2300

Dear Editor,

I wish to reply to the comments made in the letter from the Assistant General Secretary, Australian Medical Association which makes reference to the qualifications required to be a Civil Aviation Medical Examiner. As part of his defence of the AMA's position that there is no need for certification of doctors who wish to perform fitness examinations of candidates who wish to undertake scuba diving, he states that a precedent exists where Civil Aviation Medical Examiners require no training to undertake that position. I have held my examinership in that capacity for a number of years now and when I was first appointed the position was as he stated.

However since Dr. Robert Liddell has taken the position of Director of Aviation Medicine, to gain a new appointment as an examiner one must have completed the Aviation Medical Course at Monash University which is of two weeks duration. All those of us who continue to hold our position as Medical Examiner however, are also required to attend a number of Aviation Seminars which are conducted in various centres around Australia and to attend at least one Aviation Medical Society Conference each three years. It has also been stated that it is preferred that we should also complete the Monash Aviation course. A comprehensive manual is provided by the CAA.

P. C. Arnold