
ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

their checks, now saw their incomes falling behind rising prices. To such "shock" measures—designed to break complacency about inflation—all three countries added conventional economic austerity measures.

The mix worked. Most dramatic was the result in Argentina; monthly consumer price inflation dropped from 25 percent to two to three percent "almost overnight." Yet nowhere did joblessness drastically increase.

One thing that helped each of the countries was "a broad-based political consensus" for curbing inflation—a consensus that must be "exploited while it lasts." That necessity, say the authors, by itself, supplies "a strong argument in favor of shock treatment over gradualism."

SOCIETY

Humanizing New MDs

"Teaching the Humane Touch" by Amy Wallace, in *The New York Times Magazine* (Dec. 21, 1986), 229 West 43rd St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

Medicine has come far since the days when doctors applied leeches to feverish patients. Yet if medical *practices* have changed radically, medical *schools* have not. Students are still taught according to the principles that educator Abraham Flexner set forth in 1910. The "Flexner model" stresses lectures, memorization, and lab work throughout a regimen of two years of basic sciences and two years of clinical training.

An experimental program at Harvard University Medical School is challenging the old ways, reports Wallace, a *New York Times* staffer. "New Pathway," now in its second year and attended by a fifth of Harvard's 300 first- and second-year students, replaces much time once spent in lectures with tutorials and independent study. Students take courses on class and cultural conflicts, on "hateful" or terminal patients. They discuss attitudes about AIDS, abortion, smoking, and euthanasia.

To separate "humanism" from "bioscientific competence," explains New Pathway director Dr. Gordon Moore, is a "disservice." The more instruction is concerned with "people, the more successful we will be."

Critics of such thinking, such as Dr. Henry Seidel of Johns Hopkins, question whether medical schools need "a course in being human." Yet Harvard's program is the tip of a "medical humanism" iceberg. Columbia was the first major university medical school to offer "humanistic" courses. In 1982, it opened a Center for the Study of Society and Medicine, staffed by political theorists, lawyers, sociologists, and literature professors. According to a 1985 survey by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), all but 14 of the nation's 126 four-year schools now require humanistic instruction.

The AAMC notes that all new programs are vulnerable to budget axes and are "not likely to be taken as seriously as established courses." Here, the humanistic programs are not alone. Most medical schools now also offer self-help classes in malpractice suits, insurance, HMOs (health maintenance organizations), and other trade matters.