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Mr. Wei. By rch, dozens of inese intellectu- had signed a pe- on calling for the ease of prisoners iding Wei Jing- irt of the cauldron colating in China ernment clamped ents of June 1989. essed that, after e was let off six entence expired. n Munro of Asia "It's a disgusting the government for clemency. To ntil the end, then rabbit out of the for words."

ei rejoins is a far the one he knew. has never seen a ating restaurant; e amazed at the l nouveau riche jingers. No doubt to learn what he

ly days of the Mr. Wei asked do people have they want to be n destiny? Defi- the reason for the victory over the at has happened ocracy when vic- n?"

sent document that explains in terms a layman can understand the reason for the research, what the researcher expects the patient to experience and gain, and what the researcher hopes to learn or accomplish by the experiment.

The board assumes that it is possible to make this information clear and understandable to a patient and that most patients, even for fairly esoteric procedures,

to avoid the risk.

Or consider the case of Sen. Bob Dole's prostate cancer. Most managed-care plans see little medical benefit in a cancer blood test known as prostate-specific antigen, and therefore do not routinely provide it. Fortunately, Sen. Dole had the opportunity to make his own decision and opted for the test in 1991. It led to a biopsy and the surgery he contends saved his life.

tle reason to limit the amount they are spending of someone else's money, and by health-care providers who have little economic reason to weigh the cost vs. the benefit of a medical procedure. To stem this overuse, third-party payers are moving to restrict or deny the choices of their clients.

By contrast, medical savings accounts minimize the role of third-party payers by giving people the opportunity to set aside

responsibility on the physician to inform the patient about alternative therapies and their costs. Similarly, Medisave accounts would impose a greater burden of responsibility on the patient to be a more informed and rational consumer.

But then, that's the ethical thing to do:

*Mr. Matthews is the health policy director of the National Center for Policy Analysis in Dallas. He is the ethicist for Richardson Medical Center and on the institutional review board for human experimentation at Southwestern Medical School.*

## Calling All Barney Bashers

By THOMAS E. DOYLE

Barney is a purple dinosaur from our imagination. Anyone with kids under six years of age knows this.

For those of you with less vivid imaginations, let me explain that Barney is a 6-foot-2-inch man in a purple dinosaur's costume. He jumps around with a group of suburban kids (his "Backyard Gang") in a series of hugely popular videos and TV shows. The privately owned bonanza of the Lyons Group in Allen, Texas, was created to help kids "celebrate childhood and understand the complicated business of growing up." And Barney's become as celebrated as Big Bird. I even saw him on a flashlight at the checkout counter at my local hardware store. Let me not mince words: Barney represents a lot that is wrong with America.

My two-year-old daughter, Paige, has Barney tapes, Barney socks, Barney books, Barney underwear, Barney nightgowns, the flashlight, Barney dolls (plastic and fluffy), and other Barney gimcracks. Annual sales for these and many other items are estimated to be well over \$200 million. I can't go to a store without seeing that purple creature beckoning for my daughter's affection and ever more of my money. And I can't take it anymore.

Where will this end? I have this horrible nightmare in which there are Barney diaphragms advertised in Teen Magazine. I see a 14-year-old suburban girl cooing in Barney-like fashion to her hip-hop boyfriend: "I love you, you love me, but we're not ready for a family."

Another reason to hate Barney is that he's, oh so politically correct. One of his

big themes is making sure that kids understand that a clean environment is a good idea. Granted, a clean environment isn't a bad idea, but the fact that a product geared to toddlers contains such an obviously PC message as this is disingenuous at best. My daughter can't spell environment, doesn't know what an envi-



ronment is, and couldn't pick out an environment from an air conditioner if a free week at Disneyland with Barney was at stake.

Really want to clean up the environment? Garnishee Barney's wages and distribute them to city sanitation departments. To continue the PC message, we should expect to see Barney condoms, Barney dolls with little red ribbons, maybe even a homeless Barney doll.

I can watch things like "Sesame Street," or even the old cartoons, where the message is played out on a couple of levels. It's like reading "The Adventures

of Huckleberry Finn": The kids think it's a story about a boy on a raft, but the adults glean much more. Barney shows, however, are played out on only one very low level. I don't think it's possible to sink lower. We're turning out a nation of cultural morons, starting at age two.

What happened to the idea that kids' entertainment can be adults' entertainment? Who puts the tape in the VCR and also ends up watching? Who takes the kids to the movies? Who watches the cartoons from behind the newspaper?

Barney could never have happened without the VCR. Barney's success stems from the ability of two-year-olds to play his tapes over and over again so that Barney-indoctrinating songs anchor themselves into their minds.

For that matter, the VCR is turning all of us into couch potatoes of Idahoan proportions. It encourages a number of terrible traits. Mostly, it allows for instant gratification. You want to watch something *now*? No problem, just pop in that tape. How will we ever teach kids the virtue of patience when Barney-like gratification is just a remote-control button away?

I'm not calling for a federal investigation of Barney. I'm simply asking adults to think twice before they let their children become acolytes to the Cult of Barney. Kids and adults need intellectual stimulation and to entertain themselves and each other in measured doses. The Cult of Barney doesn't provide that.

*Mr. Doyle is a software consultant in New York City.*

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