

Virtual Mentor

American Medical Association Journal of Ethics
April 2000, Volume 2, Number 4: 35.

VIEWPOINT

Barry Marshall, MD, and Robin Warren, MD

Audiey Kao, MD, PhD

Nearly 20 years ago, 2 Australian physician researchers made a discovery that initially was widely ridiculed in the medical community. In the January 1983 issue of the British medical journal *The Lancet*, Australian physicians Barry Marshall and Robin Warren claimed that stomach ulcers were caused by a bacteria called *Helicobacter pylori* and not by excessive acidity in the stomach.

To test his theory, Dr. Marshall ingested the bacteria. He then documented both the formation of his stomach ulcers and their cure following treatment with a combination of antibiotics and stomach-acid-neutralizing medicines. Although many initially thought of the bacteria-ulcer link idea as foolish, by the mid-1990s, a NIH Consensus Development Conference Statement on *Helicobacter pylori* in Peptic Ulcer Disease concluded that there is indeed a strong association between ulcers and bacteria and recommended using antibiotics as the preferred treatment. At the time, only a small fraction of patients with ulcers were being treated with antibiotics. By 1996, the Food and Drug Administration approved the first antibiotic specifically for ulcers. Today, treating ulcers with antibiotics is standard therapy.

For the tenacity of Drs Marshall and Warren who remained committed to their scientific evidence despite controversy and attacks, we are pleased to present them with the Virtual Mentor Award for being exemplary role models in medicine.

Audiey Kao, MD, PhD is editor in chief of *Virtual Mentor*.

The viewpoints expressed on this site are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the AMA.

Copyright 2000 American Medical Association. All rights reserved.