

Medical ethics has recently achieved enough of a consensus about its values that the role of ethicist is being professionalized in hospitals and other large institutions throughout the country. Professionals undertake to advise such organizations about their policies and procedures when ethical problems arise. They also consult directly with patients and their families, in the manner of a medical consultation, and render an opinion about the ethical problem in question.

You are correct in foreseeing that soon we will have to exercise quality control, perhaps even cost-benefit analysis on the work of professional ethicists and their supporting committees. The irony we face is how to ride herd on the ethics of our ethicists, and how to keep questioning the ethical priorities of our ethical values.

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Achilles Tendinitis

To the Editor: Your otherwise interesting article on Achilles tendinitis (July – September 1989) contained a couple of errors. Contrary to what the article states, the mortal wounding of Achilles does not take place in the *Iliad*. The story of the immersion of Achilles in the Styx is not mentioned in either *Iliad* or *Odyssey* and is, in fact, post-Homeric.

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Editors' Comment

Oops! We goofed! At least one of our editors should have known better! True, Homer doesn't mention this but our source, relying on none other than "Bulfinch's Mythology" tells us:

For Thetis, his [Achilles'] mother, had dipped him when an infant in the river Styx, which made every part of him invulnerable except the heel by which she held him.¹

Bulfinch adds a footnote to the above:

The story of the invulnerability of Achilles is not found in Homer, and is inconsistent with his account. For how could

Achilles require the aid of celestial armor if he were invulnerable?¹

So much for Bulfinch; however, there is an account of Achilles' life in the "Aethiopis," one of the group of late Greek epic poems styled in the manner of Homer, but definitely *post-Homeric*. We hope this clarifies this for those few who may be interested and discovered our Achilles heel.

References

1. Bulfinch T. The age of fable or beauties of mythology. Edited by E.E. Hale. Boston: Lee and Shepard Publishers 1903:277.

Books Received

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- Clinical Skills in Medicine.** Sixth Edition. By Alan E. Read. 252 pp. Stoneham, MA, Butterworths, 1989. \$19.95.
- Chronic Disorders and the Family.** Edited by Froma Walsh and Carol Anderson. 187 pp. Binghamton, NY, The Haworth Press, Inc., 1988. \$24.95 (cloth), \$12.95 (paper).
- Diagnostic and Interventional Radiology: A clinical manual.** By Gregg Gaylord, Lawrence P. Davis, and Stephen R. Baker. 320 pp. Philadelphia, W.B. Saunders, 1989. \$24.95.
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- Practical Care of the Ambulatory Patient.** Edited by Barry M. Stults and Willard H. Dere. 592 pp. Philadelphia, W.B. Saunders, 1989. \$49.95.
- Primary Care: Clinics in office practice.** Volume 16/Number 2. Care of the aging patient. Edited by Glenys O. Williams. 549 pp. Philadelphia, W.B. Saunders, 1989.