

For a **WEB EXTRA** with a video and more about "POX: Save the People," see [dartmed.dartmouth.edu/su11/we05](http://dartmed.dartmouth.edu/su11/we05).

**GAME THEORY:** A Dartmouth faculty member has developed a board game—called "POX: Save the People"—aimed at improving the public's understanding about how infectious diseases are (and are not) spread. See the adjacent box for more.



## HEAVY MESSAGE, LIGHT TOUCH

The graphics are fun, the colors are bright, and the program's name is lighthearted—but its aim is dead serious. "Kids Don't Float" is the name of a new program run by the Injury Prevention Center at the Children's Hospital at Dartmouth.

With support from several local organizations, the center arranged for the installation of a life jacket loaner station at a popular boat launch on the Merrimack River in Concord, N.H. The hope is that the ready availability of life jackets may prevent a tragedy.



"Kids are top-heavy, and you can't leave them alone," warns James Esdon, manager of the Injury Prevention Center's Safe Kids New Hampshire program.

The Kids Don't Float program originated in Homer, Alaska. And it's not just drowning but hypothermia that parents need to be wary of when kids are near water—even in New Hampshire, says Esdon, where lakes and rivers can be cold in the spring and early summer. M.C.W.

## WRITE-FUL RECOGNITION

TWO DARTMOUTH MEDICINE authors—one a doctor and one a patient—were recently honored with national writing prizes in the 2011 Association of American Medical Colleges Awards for Excellence Competition.

A feature in the Summer 2010 issue, "What Matters" by Dr. Meredith Sorensen, won the top national award, the Robert G. Fenley Award for Excellence. Sorensen, a 2006 graduate of DMS who is now a resident in general surgery at DHMC, wrote about lessons she'd learned during a four-week rotation in Tanzania. Her account was described by the judges as a "fantastic story . . . alternatively descriptive, compassionate, professional." To read her article, see [dartmed.dartmouth.edu/su10/f02](http://dartmed.dartmouth.edu/su10/f02).



And a feature in the Winter 2009 issue—"The Longest Run" by John Stableford, a retired English teacher who lives in Strafford, Vt.—won honorable mention. Stableford wrote about his recovery at DHMC from a near-fatal bout with pneumonia and sepsis, offering insight into the physical and psychic ravages of severe illness. The judges called his saga "very affecting" and "a rare glimpse into the lonely, confusing, and scary world of a patient recovering consciousness." To read his article, see [dartmed.dartmouth.edu/w09/f03](http://dartmed.dartmouth.edu/w09/f03). A.S.

## Ethics expert is inaugural incumbent of new chair

Over the course of his career as a neurologist, Dr. James Bernat has been widely recognized for his work in medical ethics. But even as he's traveled the world to share his expertise, he has remained committed to providing top-notch care to patients back at DHMC.

That commitment, together with his accomplishments in research and teaching, led to his recent appointment as the inaugural incumbent in the new Louis and Ruth Frank Professorship in Neuroscience. The chair was funded by Brigadier General Louis Frank and his family out of gratitude for the care provided by Bernat to Frank and his late wife, Ruth.

**Question:** "I am thrilled and honored and humbled to be named to this chair," Bernat says. He became interested in medical ethics as a resident at Dartmouth in the 1970s, when he began to question whether the cessation of brain function was the best means of determining death. The thinking, he recalls, was that "if you can show the irreversible cessation of the clinical functions of the brain, then you can declare the patient dead, despite the fact that their heart is still beating and they're on a ventilator. . . . I was a little skeptical initially about whether the person really was dead."

So Bernat began to study the issue in earnest, and in 1981 he and two Dartmouth colleagues published a groundbreaking pa-

per that affirmed the use of brain death as the best way of determining death. "That was the first time there was a rigorous philosophical justification for why brain-dead patients are, in fact, dead," Bernat says.

**Ethics:** As his interest in medical ethics grew, Bernat became widely sought as a consultant; he's advised the Vatican and the World Health Organization, among other organizations. In April, he received the prestigious President's Award from the American Academy of Neurology (AAN); for 10 years he chaired the AAN ethics committee. Closer to home, he has chaired DHMC's ethics committee since 1994.

The field has become more rigorous since Bernat was a resident, but he feels the training that medical students receive could be improved. "It isn't really clear what the best way is to teach medical ethics," he says. With his appointment to the Frank Chair, he plans to pursue research on the teaching of the subject. He also plans to write a new edition of his book *Ethical Issues in Neurology*, first published in 1994.

**Appointment:** All of this, he notes, will be made possible by the appointment. "It's a wonderful time in my career," he says.

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