

## Editorial

*This issue is devoted to topics in Perinatal Medicine which have been presented at the last two perinatal epidemiology meetings in Bern. The objective of these meetings is to promote and fortify communication between professionals concerned with issues in perinatal health. While certain changes previously recommended from these meetings remain to be implemented, e. g. the inclusion of gestational age and place of birth in the records of vital statistics (birth certificate), it is our hope that other previously conceived endeavours in perinatal epidemiology have gained recognition and momentum.*

*The articles forming the main frame of this issue of the Journal deal with quality and cost of perinatal care. The articles on the costs vary in their methods and depth of analysis, but are important to us since they present original data for Switzerland. The methodology used to obtain these figures is cumbersome and/or oversimplified. We need to develop standardised methods of analysis allowing us to follow in space and time the costs of neonatal care in various hospital settings.*

*If more economic thinking is to be introduced in the evaluation of perinatal care, then proper measures of costs and benefits have to be developed and used. Health economics now provides several tools aimed to obtain a fairer assessment of the net impact of health care. Such a tool are the QALYs (Quality adjusted life years), i. e. a number of years gained attributable to an intervention weighed by the quality of life for survivors. This weighing is of paramount importance to assess the impact of care for chronic diseases which are not lethal at short term. Despite the fact that QALYs need substantial improvement (especially for children care because of the indirect assessment of quality by another person, i. e. parent, and because of the uncertainty of long term evolution of most conditions), there is no doubt that there will be a wide use of this measure in the coming years. Professionals working in perinatal care should become interested in these developments.*

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