

B. Francis Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School.

Dr Drazen was immediately confronted with controversy surrounding his close ties with pharmaceutical companies from which he has received funding. Last year, Dr Drazen had provided an overstated estimation of the efficacy of a drug marketed by Sepracor for the treatment of asthma. The Food and Drug Administration issued a "notice of violation" to the company in March 1999 indicating that they found certain statements used in a company press release for levalbuterol to be misleading. Dr Drazen had been paid by the company to evaluate studies of levalbuterol and acknowledged that his assessment had been "overzealous". The *New England Journal of Medicine's* conflict-of-interest rules exclude him from writing editorials or articles related to his research within two years of accepting commercial funding. To avoid future conflicts of interest, Dr Drazen said he would excuse himself from the editorial process for any papers submitted that relate to asthma, or to nine major companies from which he has received research grants or consultation fees.

In accepting the appointment at the *New England Journal of Medicine*, Dr Drazen said: "We must protect the integrity of the *Journal's* editorial process and the integrity of the *Journal's* information without compromise." Last February, after an internal investigation prompted by articles in the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Journal* found it had violated its own rules by publishing 19 articles by authors with drug industry ties, including a review authored by Dr Drazen despite his full disclosure.

Massachusetts Medical Society President Jack T. Evjy praised Dr Drazen as "one of the nation's leaders in academic medicine." President-Elect Virginia T. Latham emphasized that he would enjoy complete editorial freedom and complete authority over the content of the journal, as well as full authority and responsibility for hiring editors and staff.

Dr Drazen replaces Dr Marcia Angell as Editor-in-Chief, who, in turn, had replaced Dr Jerome P. Kassirer, fired by the *Journal's* publisher, the Massachusetts Medical Society, after eight years at the helm. Dr Kassirer had clashed with society officials over proposals to promote web sites and create new specialty journals

Controversy surrounds new Editor-in-Chief at the *New England Journal of Medicine*

The Massachusetts Medical Society has named Dr Jeffrey M. Drazen as the new Editor-in-Chief of the 188-year-old *New England Journal of Medicine*, one of the world's most prestigious medical journals. Dr Drazen, 53, a leading asthma researcher, is the Chief of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine at the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, and is the Parker

using the journal's logo, reputation, and its profitability, estimated at US\$ 20 million a year. ■

Fred Charatan, *Florida*