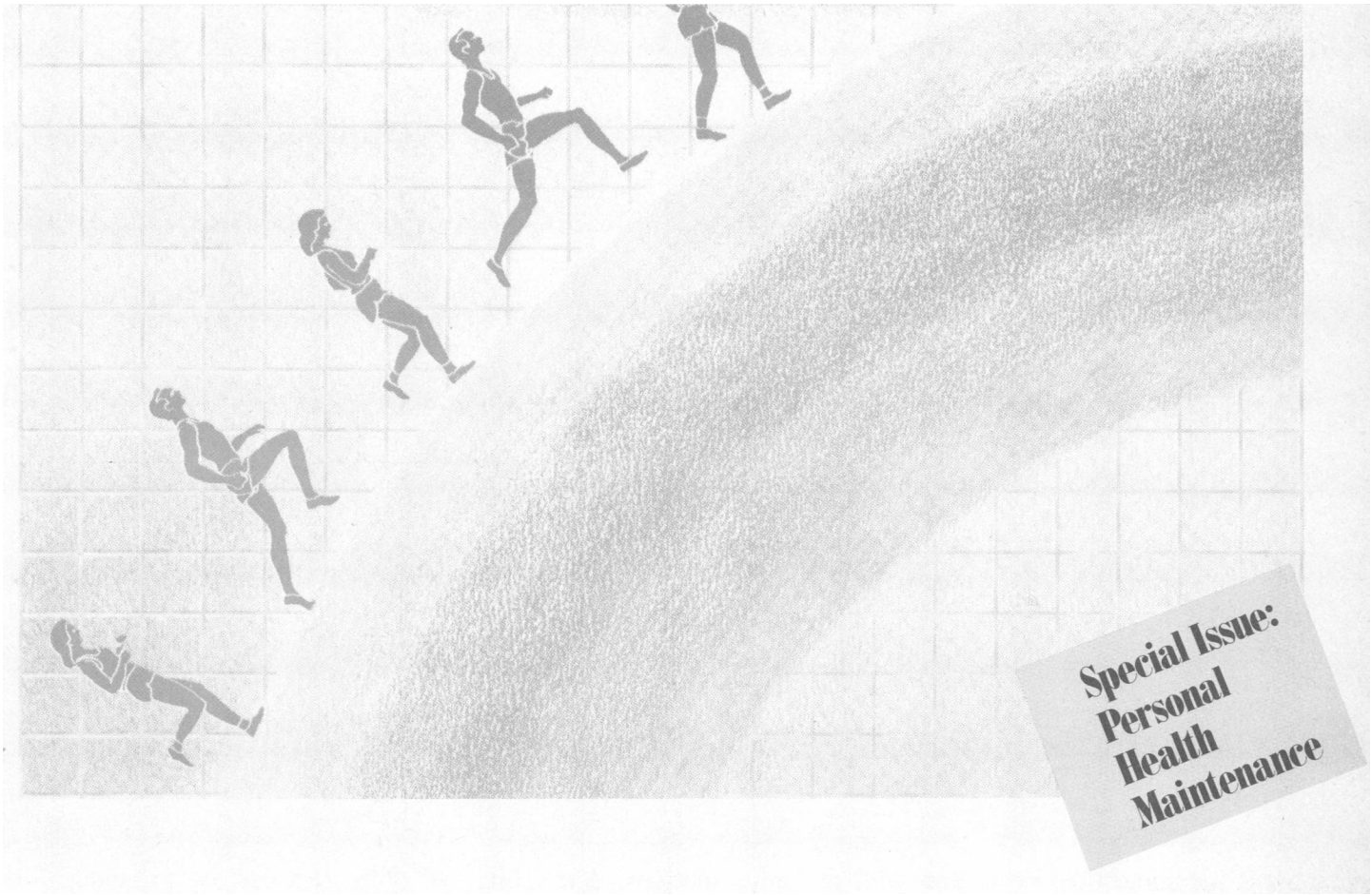
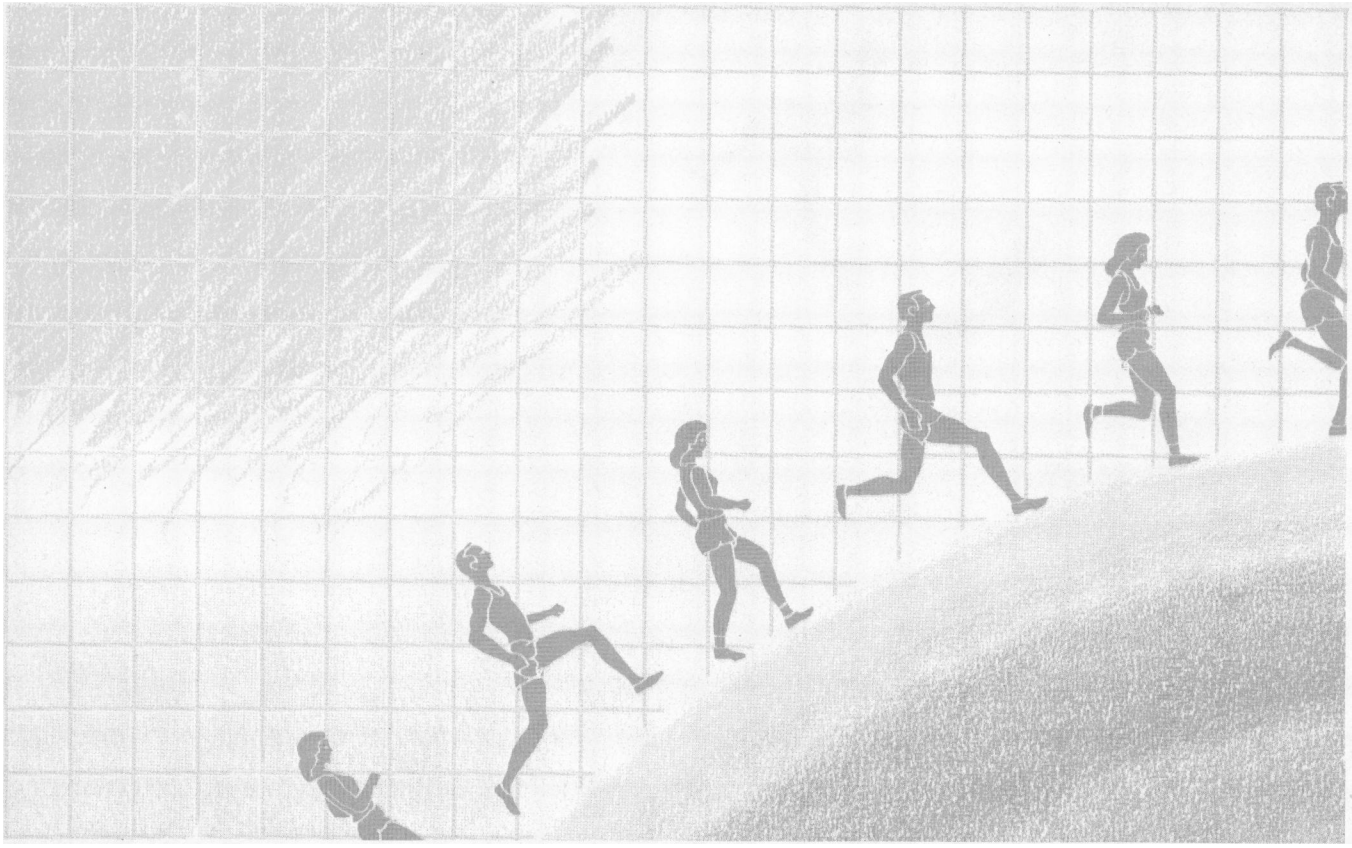


The Scientific Evidence for Personal Health Maintenance

During the past few years interest in health and personal health maintenance has been taking on new dimensions. At first sight one might be tempted to think that this is just another fad, here today and gone tomorrow. But this interest in health, at least in this country, is beginning to come through as something deeper, more profound, and if this is so there must be a deeper and more profound reason. Could the reason be that there are now beginning to be convincing scientific data showing that a healthy life-style and some attention to personal health maintenance can actually pay off in better health and improved well-being—and that the effort is really worth it? It would seem that this just might be the case.

There are some who may say that all this interest in wellness and fitness is purely economic. And it is true that many payors of health care are looking to wellness and fitness promotion and health maintenance to help reduce their health care costs. Many of the larger corporations in business and industry are beginning to provide exercise and fitness programs for their employees, no doubt for economic as well as social reasons.



And for some time now, and with the same motives, counseling and other services are promoted for employees who may have problems with alcohol or other drug dependence, occupational hazards in the work place or psychological maladjustment affecting their performance. But the present and obviously growing interest in wellness and fitness seems to go far beyond any interest industry, business or the payors of health care may have in "the bottom line." People are investing their own time and money in wellness and fitness activities on a scale none of us can remember ever having seen before.

One is reminded that it is only since the turn of the century that health care itself became something worth having. And its value, its use and its cost have been increasing ever since. The underlying reason for all of this, of course, is the dramatic progress that has been made in biomedical science. It now appears that progress in medical and health science has begun to show that personal health maintenance is also something worth more serious attention and that attention to it can actually pay off in better health and improved well-being for persons of almost any age. It now seems reasonably predictable that as scientific studies in this field continue to be made, wellness and fitness programs will increase in public acceptance, much as has happened with health care in recent decades—and for the same reasons.

This issue of *The Western Journal of Medicine* seeks to present the current scientific basis for many aspects of personal health maintenance. Its purpose is to provide physicians, and any others who may be interested, with authoritative information on the state of our knowledge concerning this emerging and increasingly important segment of health care.

The editors wish to thank the guest editor for this issue (who also happens to be the journal's Special Editor for Utah) for persuading authors of such distinction to write the eminently useful articles that are to be found herein, and himself for pulling it all together.

MSMW