Some excellent and practical review articles related to seizure disorders and epilepsy are included in this issue of Pediatric Annals, guest-edited by Joseph R. Hageman, MD. As we all see children who have or have had seizures of one manner or another, the information is timely.

RATING THE MOVIES

For some time, I’ve been vaguely aware that the American system of rating movies (PG-13, R, etc.) was in need of improvement, especially as it relates to its impact upon children (and parents). A recent article in Pediatrics by Brad J. Bushman, PhD, and colleagues highlights just how very out of kilter the system is. Many (including myself) have long been critical of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) ratings in that they are extremely prudish when it comes to sex and foul language but extremely liberal regarding violence, bloodshed, and mayhem. Even though the MPAA website states that R-rated films show more violence than PG-13 films, Bushman’s study clearly documents that the number of scenes with gunplay has tripled in PG-13 films since 1985 and that, in 2012, PG-13 films were actually more violent and bloodier than R-rated films.

Now PG-13 films, which technically indicate that “some material may be inappropriate for children under 13,” include Batman’s The Dark Knight, for example, with 33 violent segments, 13 involving guns. Man of Steel and other films with body counts in the thousands have also received PG-13 ratings. At the same time, an intelligent movie like The King’s Speech received an R rating for a few vulgarities.

What a revelation! A PG-13 rating actually greatly increases the potential size of audiences for a film by allowing teens to attend without adults.

There is, however, an independent film rating in the U.S. that can be consulted. Bushman and colleagues recommend that the MPAA should be replaced by something closer to the European model for movie ratings, which utilizes child development experts and uses consistent ratings for

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Mexican anti-smoking stamp honors “Dia Mundial sin Tabac,” or World Day without Tobacco, in 2012.
movies, TV shows, and video games. I’ve become aware of the appalling amount of violence and bloodshed in modern video games just from their ads during TV sports broadcasts. A unified, realistic rating system that includes video games could be a significant goal of our professional pediatric organizations.

THIS MONTH’S STAMPS

Two Mexican stamps and a Russian souvenir sheet illustrate this column. Despite appearances, the anti-smoking Mexican stamp does not label tobacco a “sin,” but rather honors Dia Mundial sin Tabaco, in 2012. The second Mexican stamp celebrates Dia de los Abuelos, the Day of the Grandparents, which has become an annual event in Mexico.

The brown Russian sheet issued in 2010 honors Nikolai Ivanovich Pirogov (1810-1881; sometimes seen as Pirogoff), considered the greatest Russian surgeon and one of the greatest military surgeons of all time. Known as the founder of field surgery, he used anesthesia in field operations as early as 1847; invented various new operations, including improved amputation methods; and developed an improved method of casting fractures. Pirogov supported the development of volunteer nurses for Russian troops after studying the work by Florence Nightingale for the British forces in The Crimean War in the 1850s. Pirogov also developed a novel method of embalming and, thus, his embalmed body has been on display in Russia for more than 130 years.

REFERENCES