The Weathervane

Outrageous.

Kusserow lives! In an unbelievable criminal indictment, Hilo ophthalmologist, John Zelko MD is being prosecuted by the state Attorney General’s office for “criminal solicitation to commit first degree promotion of a harmful drug.” The actual alleged crime—writing a prescription for Fastin, a schedule four diet medication. In these days when pot, ice, PCP, heroin, and designer drugs are marketed casually on the streets of Chinatown, Waikiki and Lahaina, one can only wonder what malicious line of thinking produced this egregious and destructive action against a 75-year-old physician who has given over thirty years of medical practice to the people of Hilo. This case smells remarkably like the work done by Richard Kusserow some years ago when he drove at least one doctor to suicide with his malicious and erroneous accusations of fraud against innocent doctors. Is this sort of desperate act necessary in order to justify the existence of a drug enforcement agency? What gives here? Is it any wonder that physicians become paranoid?

Politicians don’t break agreements, they just make a new set of promises.

Laws which require health plans to allow into their networks any providers willing to accept the plans, terms and payment rates are called “any willing provider” laws. In 1995, Arkansas enacted a broad AWP law, which was supported by all provider organizations in the state. However, similar bills were defeated in Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia and West Virginia. It is hardly likely we will get such legislation by the big bullies at HMSA and Kaiser that control medical expenditures in our little state.

Everything put together sooner or later falls apart.

In response to the Rand Report that concluded that a large surplus of eye care providers exists, the Association of University Professors of Ophthalmology (AUP0) recommended that medical schools cut the number of ophthalmic residencies from 454 to just 200—a huge 56% reduction. If this recommendation and similar ones for some other specialties should come about, the next generation of physicians will obviously be dominated by generalists. The times they are a-changin’.

The second half of the 20th century is a complete flop.

The degree of ignorance out there in our “sophisticated” culture is mind boggling. According to a recent Harris poll, 44% believe that optometrists are MDs, 35% believe that psychologists are MDs, 30% think that chiropractors are MDs, and a whopping 63% call podiatrists MDs. This issue of ignorance must be addressed through our AMA, state and medical specialty associations. When respondents were informed as to the true definition of MD, 97% did not want optometrists to perform laser surgery on their eyes. Is it any wonder that we have perverse laws which threaten quality health care, when one recognizes that many of these same people are elected to public office?

Faith is that quality which enables us to believe that what we are doing is useful.

The June meeting of the AMA House of Delegates dealt with numerous resolutions regarding the use of the excimer and other lasers by nonmedical practitioners. The frightening Idaho situation in which the Board of Optometry has decided to redefine the practice of medicine, has precipitated a lawsuit joining together the AAO, the Idaho Medical Association and the Idaho Society of Ophthalmology. Additionally, the AMA House came out strongly against renegade Dr Jack Kevorkian and the concept of doctor-assisted-suicide. Again, stress was made upon the difference between removal of life support systems, and actively helping a patient to kill him/herself.

The need of exercise is a modern superstition, invented by people who eat too much and have nothing to think about.

According to a recent energy expenditure study conducted at the University of Wisconsin, comparing stair stepper, treadmill, rowing machine, cycling ergometer, and cross-country skiing simulator, the treadmill proved to be the optimal indoor exercise machine for enhancing energy expenditure.

Science is truth: don’t be misled by facts.

In these days of world travel, think strongly about your air carrier and the places you plan to visit. The FAA has a list of those countries that do not meet international aviation safety standards. Substandard means that the country’s air traffic control system, supply and maintenance of emergency equipment, and aircraft inspection do not meet safety guidelines. Therefore, fly with caution to Belize, Dominican Republic, Gambia, Ghana, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Uruguay, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, and Zaire. Oh yes, have a nice trip.

Be frank and explicit with your attorney, it’s his role to confuse the issue afterwards.

Cleveland orthopedist Harry Figgie III MD, has proved once again that altering records after the fact can cause great trouble and expense. At the trial, the doctor admitted that he had amended the record because it “did not reflect accurately the discussion.” Not only did the doctor lose the malpractice case with damages at $3.25 million, but the Ohio Supreme Court set a punitive award at $1 million. Doctors are told repeatedly that if you alter the record, and you are caught (as will likely happen), you will lose the jury and the trial. If you feel you must add or correct the chart later, draw a line neatly through the erroneous part so the original are legible, then initial and date the change.

Addenda

◊ The Sharper Image now has a seat cushion which will stay warm for up to eight hours after five minutes in the microwave, named Lava Buns.
◊ Bob Dole is Gerald Ford without the pizzazz.