No good deed should go unpunished.

How often do you check the expiration date on a free drug sample that you give to a patient? In New Jersey, an ophthalmologist gave a patient a sample vial of Voltaren, which was outdated. The less-than-grateful patient notified the Board of Medical Examiners. Unbelievably, in response the Attorney General’s office drafted an inspection order that allowed investigators to see, copy, and videotape the premises and all records, including appointment logs, licenses, job descriptions and equipment. The doctor refused to allow the inspection of any items not already in plain sight. The investigators conducted a search, and subsequently the attorney general filed an order to suspend the doctor’s license for failing to comply with the inspection order and the Board fined the physician $1000. The doctor has filed a suit against the state board, and the Medical Society of New Jersey has joined in the complaint.

Looked up the elevator shaft to see if the car was coming down - It was!

A cluster of ocular reactions to blood infusion occurred in the Pacific northwest in December 1997. The patients experienced conjunctival hemorrhage (100%), eye pain (62%), headache (25%), periorbital edema (23%), and lesser degrees of arthralgia, nausea, dyspnea and skin rash. After the initial report, similar events were reported in fourteen states around the country. Where data was available, it was found that 45 of 46 patients received at least one unit of blood filtered with the LeukoNet Prestorage Leukoreduction Filtration System of HemaSure Inc. of Marlborough, Massachusetts. A voluntary quarantine on seven other lots was invoked, and no additional adverse reactions have been reported.

You have to study a great deal to know a little.

The days of the perpetual student are numbered. In response to the pinch from government budget cuts, an increasing number of state universities have begun to penalize career undergraduates. Students who have accumulated enough credits to graduate are assessed a tuition surcharge sometimes amounting to out-of-state fees. The idea is simple - students who have completed enough credits to graduate should no longer be subsidized by taxpayers. It is still too soon to measure the effect, however the early signs are promising that these external students are moving into jobs or graduate programs, and only a handful have had to pay the surcharge.

Remember, one false step is never retrieved.

A woman working as a research lab technician at Emory University was moving a caged rhesus macaque monkey when an unspecified substance splashed in her eye. Because she was only moving the cage and not cleaning or feeding the animal, she was not wearing eye protection. She thought the event was a minor one, wiped her eye with a towel, and did not attempt to determine the precise origin of the substance. Ten days later she developed headache and eye infection, and was admitted to the Emory University Hospital. Initially, she responded well to antiviral medication, and her condition improved after 8 to 10 days. She was discharged from the hospital, but the following day her condition deteriorated. She became paralyzed, and died about six weeks after contracting the disease. Her disease was defined as herpes B, a rare disease in humans, but common in adult rhesus monkeys. Herpes B carries a 70% mortality rate in humans.

There are in fact two things, science and opinion; the former begets knowledge, the latter ignorance. (Hippocrates)

The Surgeon General of the United States was a vacant post for three years. Since Joycelyn Elders, MD dared to talk openly about masturbation and was forced to resign, the chair had been empty. President Clinton’s next nominee, Henry Foster, MD, failed to obtain Senate confirmation because he admitted performing a few abortions, and thereby offended the right-to-life faction. Now we again have a Surgeon General as David Satcher, MD, was confirmed in a 63-35 vote after months of opposition by conservatives who objected to his views on AIDS and abortion. The role of Surgeon General has no precise definition or obligation, but offers an unlimited pulpit for preaching to the public over all matters of health. Dr Satcher, formerly headed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and he has promised to focus on teen pregnancy and discouraging the use of tobacco. Probably he will avoid discussions of health risks for White House interns.

Just a short while ago people thought semi-conductors were part time orchestra leaders, and microchips were very, very tiny snack foods.

Telemedicine is presenting a thorny problem in our electronic medical world. Twenty-one states now require full and unrestricted licensure if physicians perform any service or procedure described under the state’s medical practice statute. The Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) crafted model legislation which would allow a doctor who holds an unrestricted medical license in one state to obtain a reciprocal license in another state when restricted to electronic consultations. Only California, Texas and Alabama have enacted telemedicine laws based on the FSMB model. There is notable opposition in many other medical organizations, including the AMA, based on a “genuine concern” for patient safety.

Informed consent is a cloudy pillow - uninformd consent is a hammer.

A patient developed a bunion on the great toe of her right foot. She went to her physician who examined her foot and told her that she had a bunion, but also had a problem with a metatarsal bone of the same foot. He informed her that she would attend to the bunion, but that he would not remedy the metatarsal problem. Subsequently, the patient recovered from the bunion surgery, but still had foot difficulties related to the metatarsal problem. Specifically, she was unable to wear high heel shoes. Her malpractice complaint centered around the surgeon’s admission that he had not informed her that she would not have a normal foot even though his surgery was successful. The patient was awarded $25,000, based upon the lack of informed consent.

There ought to be one day—just one—when there is open season on bureaucrats.

According to research by focus groups and polls conducted by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), members and other citizens want the following from Medicare: 1. A doctor who will take time and listen. 2. The ability to choose your own doctor. 3. The ability to go directly to the appropriate specialist without a gatekeeper or referral. 4. Prescription drug coverage. However, consider for a moment, are these not the primary things that everyone would want from a health plan, and are these not the very things that Congress has built into their own health plan, but tried to restrict in Medicare?

Hello Mexico, and adios, baby, to you.

Fourteen years of prohibition of alcohol ended in 1933 when the Democratic Congress repealed the Volstead Act, the 18th Amendment to the Constitution. Since that time the number one imported beer in America has been Heineken from the Netherlands. Nothing lasts forever, and now we are told by the beverage industry publication Impact that the Mexican beer Corona has taken over first place in the palates of those who desire imported suds. The college students and yuppies of generation X have developed Latin-American taste buds.

Addenda—

† Kaiser-Permanente posted a loss of $270 million for 1997.
† Despite advances in psychiatric therapy, suicide rates have remained the same for the past 25 years.
† The first car to offer seatbelts was the 1950 Nash Rambler.
† If you are six feet or taller, you are too tall to be an astronaut.

Aloha and keep the faith — rts