Always Remember To Pillage Before You Burn.
It has been suggested that any doctor who signs a contact without reading it
deserves whatever comes down. As part of a practice management course
developed several years ago for the American College of Gastroenterology
Philip Grossman, a Miami MD, sent phony contracts from a fictional
managed care company. The contracts included what were called absurd
statements and ridiculous terms. Of course, a majority of the physicians
accepted the terms of the contract, either signing and returning it, or
agreeing over the phone. It appeared that the majority never read the
contract at all. The excuse is that physicians are swamped with work and
are too busy to labor through the jargon. “Eternal vigilance is the price of
freedom,” somebody said once, and it continues to be a vital axiom in this
third millennium.

Don’t Worry. It Only Seems Kinky The First Time.
Now there is real promise of saving the vision for macular degeneration
patients with the advent of photodynamic therapy. Approximately 200,000
patients each year are afflicted with wet macular degeneration when
abnormal blood vessels begin to grow beneath the macula, and leak fluid
and blood, threatening a rapid loss of macular vision. The use of a light-
activating drug targets the blood vessels and a cool laser stimulates the drug
destroying the leaky vessels without damaging the surrounding healthy
tissue. This safe procedure represents a great improvement over traditional
high-intensity laser therapy which necessarily destroys healthy tissue along
with the leaking vessels. Obviously, the procedure does not regenerate
damaged tissue, but if diagnosis is made promptly and photodynamic
treatment utilized, useful macular function may be retained.

Some People Go About Doing Good, Others Just Go About.
Health Risk Management Inc. is a consulting company evaluating indi-
vidual states quality of medical care. Using 46 quality indicators that
consider what individuals, health care systems, and states do to affect health
status and care, the company came up with a statewide ranking system.
Interestingly, states rated best in overall quality, also generally have lower
per-capita health care costs. Number one in quality was found to be
Minnesota with a per-capita cost of $228, immediately followed by Hawaii
with a cost of $227. Scraping the bottom in quality was a tie between
Mississippi and Louisiana. The top 10 states had an average per-capita
health care expenditure of $239 in 1999, 11% lower than the bottom 10
costs average of $268.

You Never Really Learn To Swear Until You Deal With An
Insurer.
Not unlike a local company (no names, please), Aetna US Healthcare, the
nation’s largest health insurer, is under attack from physicians for low
reimbursement and administrative manipulation. In seeking to polish up
their image, Aetna is on the attack with full-page advertisements in the New
York Times. “We want to hear from the people who matter the most,
patients, business and medical professionals.” The medical CEO, Arthur
Leibowitz, M.D. says the company listens to the physicians and visits them
at least once a year in their offices. The company opened a physicians
relations unit to increase direct contact with patients and doctors. One
doctor who canceled his contract, said it is pure public relations baloney and
nothing more. He likened the PR ploy to Saddam Hussein saying, “I’m just
misunderstood. I don’t understand why the world hates me. Just e-mail me
at Saddam.com.”

As Ye Smoke, So Shall Ye Reek.
A very interesting study published in the American Journal of Public Health
authored by two Boston University researchers, examined how anti-to-
bacco ads effect teen age smoking. The four year study encompassed
children 12 years and above, and found that the children who had been
regularly exposed to the state’s anti-smoking TV spots were half as likely
to have started smoking as their peers who saw the ads less frequently.
However, children 13 years and older when the ads began did not change
their smoking habits. The study is significant because it gauges the effects
on children of a state-wide anti-smoking campaign over an extended period
of time. It emphasizes the importance of early education, because once a
child is 15 years old, it seems too late to reach them. Let’s hope that the
Hawaii State Legislature will take note of a good way to use the tobacco
settlement cash.

When You Jump For Joy, Beware That No One Moves The
Ground Under Your Feet.
Some investors are hurryng to buy into Fusion Medical Technologies. The
company has come up with a product called FloSeal, a biodegradable
product made of collagen and thrombin that stops active bleeding. The FDA
approved the product in December as a hemostat sealant. FloSeal takes a
minute to prepare, looks like caviar, can be squirted from a syringe, and can
stop the bleeding in a few minutes. Other products, such as fibrin clays, can
take from 15 to 40 minutes. According to the company, in a clinical trial of
309 patients, FloSeal stopped bleeding within 10 minutes in 96% of cases,
compared with 77% of patients who were treated with Gelfoam and
thrombin. The product costs about $130 per kit, which should attract
hospital buyers, and can reduce operating room times. Of course, the
success of the product will hinge on how well the company can get the
product to the market, and especially how they can persuade surgeons to
change their habits.

Nothing Is So Good As It Seems Beforehand.
Not too left at the post in refractive surgery, Bausch and Lomb has received
FDA approval to market their vision-correction laser in the United States.
A powerful company in the eye care market, B&L will prove a strong
competitor to industry leader Visx. The marketplace for refractive surgery
continues on its wild ride as the B&L announcement comes on the heels of a
price-cutting war with Nidek and others. B&L has been marketing their
laser for three years in Europe and executives claim they captured about one
third of the market there. They expect to do as well in the US.

Treatment Of A Non-Disease Is A Little Bit Silly.
In homes with small children, a bottle of ipecac is sure to be in the medicine
cabinet. Virtually every parenting magazine or family medical book urges
parents to stock the famous syrup. Now an increasing number of doctors and
poison experts are telling parents to toss ipecac out. A study published in
the Journal of Toxicology showed that patient outcomes weren’t affected by
the use of ipecac, and sometimes interfered with other treatment. While the
drug does induce vomiting, studies have shown that its use doesn’t make any
significant difference in the treatment of poisonings. Even if the drug is
taken immediately after ingesting a toxic substance, the vomiting removes
only 30 to 50% of the substance. Also, the vomiting may produce additional
damage on the way back up. Other treatments, such as activated charcoal
and pumping the stomach, have little impact if administered more than an
hour after poisoning. But the clinicians argument against such methods is
that in 1998, 99.9% of calls to the nation’s poison control centers involving
children under age six were for poisonings that resulted in minor or no health
problems. However, it is nearly impossible to convince parents that the best
intervention is to give the child a glass of milk to dilute the substance and
soothe the tissues.

Roaches Are Not As Stupid As You Think; For Example,
They Have No Lawyers.
Doctors at the University of Pittsburgh have answered an age old question
— how to remove an arthropod from the external ear canal. A patient was
seen in the emergency room with a cockroach in each ear canal. In a
controlled study, researchers (?) placed mineral oil in one ear and 2%
ycloxaine in the other. The xylocaine roach exited promptly, but the mineral
oil roach had to be extracted – apparently belching and slightly slippery as
well.

**ADENDA**

- With a blink, your eyelid stays closed for 1/20th second, then starts up
leaving a film of tears behind.
- Your eye processes grey more easily than any other color.
- If April showers bring may flowers what do may flowers bring? Pilgrims.
- I like cats too. Let’s exchange recipes.

Aloha and keep the faith.