It's Not The Heat, It's The Validity.

In Singapore, authorities have converted a thermal imaging camera used by the military into a screening device for the deadly virus, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). Now more countries are joining in this effort to ferret out travelers with fevers. The infra-red camera can detect one degree or more above 98.6°F without touching the person. The camera does not measure the temperature, but has been calibrated to produce a red image of the feverish individual. The passenger showing red is directed to a nursing station where a nurse in gown and mask, rechecks the temperature. The individual is made to sit down for 30 minutes, and if the fever remains above 100.4°F, the traveler is referred to a hospital dedicated to caring for SARS patients. The checks are fast, non-intrusive, and people are usually obvious. Some say “thank you” after being informed they were checked and found normal.

Beauty Is Only Sin Deep.

Having spent thousands of dollars for a face lift, eyelid lift, fat-sucking-tummy tuck, butt lift, and botox in the brow, now what does a lady do about those hands - wrinkled, droopy, liver-spotted, gross dilated veins - a dead giveaway of her age? Fear not! Here comes da plastic guy (again)! First, some fat is sucked off the thighs or other “problem areas,” and injected into those saggy pockets of skin, then zap the wrinkles with special lasers that stimulate collagen, collapse the bulging veins with saline solutions, and finally peel away the discoloration and sun spots with the laser. Voila! Madame is back to age 39. Well, 45 maybe?

Cooperation Is Everything. Freckles Would Make A Nice Tan If They Got Together.

As a political power in matters of medical liability at our legislature, the Hawaii Medical Association is pretty puny, no matter how vocal and righteous we are. What is needed in Hawaii is what was recently accomplished in the state of Idaho. A broad-based and powerful coalition was formed of small business, product manufacturers, big business, county governments, the Idaho Medical Association, store owners, and many others, all united to establish a liability law which effectively squashed the trial attorneys. Similar to Idaho, here in Hawaii we have hundreds of organizations and individuals just as angry as doctors are at trial lawyers and the abuse of the liability process. In Idaho, every politician was contacted by an influential person in his/her district to emphasize why tort reform was necessary. The politicians listened. It took time, money, organization, and a willingness to cooperate, and it worked.

We Have Confused The Free With The Free And Easy.

Not satisfied with the great boost in income resulting from direct to consumer advertising DTC. General Electric and GE Medical Systems in conjunction with NBC, have created the Patient Channel. Available only by satellite, the Patient Channel is wired directly into 550 hospitals and medical facilities across the country, and serves as a marketing tool for the pharmaceutical industry. They plan to boost that number to 1100 medical units by September, Commercial Alert, a not-for-profit organization based in Portland, Oregon, sent a letter (co-signed by 37 doctors) to the CEOs of all hospitals and hospital chains of 2000 beds or more, urging them to say no to this crass, ad delivery system. It is increasingly apparent that the pharmaceutical people have no shame.

Is Anyone Interested In Sweetness And Light?

A study of an exciting new polyvalent vaccine Prevnar made by Wyeth was conducted by an exciting new polyvalent vaccine Prevnar made by Wyeth and reported in the New England Journal of Medicine. The study encompassed a seven state network that monitored the cases of pneumococcal disease in a population of 16 million people. The findings were so dramatic that public health recommendations are that all children should be so immunized. The vaccine is effective against meningitis, blood infections, and pneumonia, and showed a 69% reduction in serious diseases caused by pneumococcus in children less than two years old. An interesting corollary was that older siblings, parents and other adults in the household benefitted as well. Disease rates for adults 20 to 39 years old, dropped 32% while those over age 65 showed a decrease of 18%, even though they had not received the vaccine. There is a drawback, of course. The price is $61/shot and four injections are required. Still, considering the cost of treating such illnesses, it is well worth the cost. Many pediatricians and family physicians are already making the vaccine routine.

The Best Thing To Eat On A Diet Is — Less.

Dr. Robert Atkins, the weight conscious doctor who conceived the Atkins Diet, a controversial low-carbohydrate weight loss program, died recently. He slipped on ice, struck his head and died of a brain injury. Rather sad that he did not live to see his diet findings published in the New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM May 22). Researchers had several cautions and were careful not to endorse the diet, but their studies indicated a short-term benefit. In a study of 63 obese men and women, the Atkins patients lost on average, 15 pounds after six months. The group on the low-fat, high carb diet lost only 6.9 pounds in the same period. In a similar six month study at Philadelphia Veterans Affairs Medical Center of 132 obese patients, the Atkins cohort dropped 13 pounds compared to 4 pounds for the low-fat group. Moreover, the Atkins diet showed a greater reduction in triglycerides, and despite a higher saturated fat intake, investigators, found no significant increase in "bad cholesterol" levels.

We Ought Not To Do Wrong When Other People Are Looking.

In a study reported in the Journal of Medical Ethics, researchers wanted to attempt a measurement of ethics of medical students at Dundee University in Scotland. The study included 461 students who were asked if they would consider writing "Nervous system examination - normal" in a patient presentation without having performed the procedure. A mere 2% of first-year students said yes to the question, but 45% of their older counterparts in years 2 and 3 indicated they would consider it, and 54% of fourth-year people said yes to the hypothetical scenario. This is preposterous!! Why aren’t these "yes" students in law school?

There Is Certainly No Exact Standard Of Quality.

The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) stated that beginning in 2006, inspections would be unannounced, and rather than a three year cycle, they would drop in every two to four years. This is good. Now medical organizations won’t spend months in worrisome preparation for JCAHO’s paper shuffling nuisance pretense at quality analysis. Hospitals will have 45 days to correct any problems noted by the nitpickers. Hospital quality is extremely important, but JCAHO has failed to be that vehicle.

I’m Out Of My Mind, But Feel Free To Leave A Message.

You may have read some of these gems before. They come from medical testimony doctors offered in court and are recorded in the Journal of Court Reporting. To quote: "By the time he was admitted, his rapid heart had stopped and he was feeling better.” “Patient states there is a burning pain in his penis, which goes to his feet.” “On the second day the knee was better and on the third day it had completely disappeared.” “Patient has been depressed ever since she began seeing me in 1983.” “Patient refused autopsy.” “Patient has left his white blood cells at another hospital.” And finally, “She slipped on the ice and apparently her legs went in separate directions in early December.”

ADDENDA

- 25% of the oxygen in your vascular system, is used by the brain.
- Hello, fat America! For flight calculation purposes, the FAA is recommending that average passenger summer weight be increased 10 lbs to 190 lbs, and winter weight be increased to 195 lbs.
- In one or two weeks, Girl Scouts sell 10% of all the cookies sold annually in the nation.
- Eight nickels = two paradigms. 100 Senators = not one decision. Aloha and keep the faith.”

Contents of this column do not necessarily reflect the opinion or position of the Hawaii Ophthalmological Society and the Hawaii Medical Association. Editorial comment is strictly that of the writer.