There are two kinds of people, those who finish what they start, and so on...

Nice guy, witty and charming, Richard Mills MD, the outgoing president of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, honored the HOS at the November annual election meeting. Dr Mills has toiled in the fields of private practice and now serves as professor of ophthalmology at the University of Washington Medical School. His eloquence at the AMA House of Delegates in speaking on behalf of the AAO and all eye surgeons served to educate the House and helped forge the AMA policy opposing HCFA’s plan for centers of excellence. He noted that the AAO currently enjoys a high rating from members because the two-thirds who supported the plan to ally with Lenscrafters were glad for the effort, and the one-third who opposed it were happy with the failure. Now, says Dr Mills, the AAO leadership is primed, poised and ready to take a new direction, but doesn’t know which way to go.

There is nothing so ridiculous as the public in a fit of morality.

Three New York physicians challenged the constitutionality of laws that prevent assisted suicide. The point was made that the state recognizes the right of a competent terminally ill patient to refuse treatment even if doing so hastens death. The doctors contended that a patient in a similar circumstance, deciding to commit suicide with the help of a physician, is essentially the same issue. The court disagreed and held that a vast difference exists between allowing nature to take its course and intentionally prescribing death-producing medication. Present AMA policy reflects the court’s ruling.

A learned blockhead is a greater blockhead than an ignorant one.

A legal event in Texas may open the door for plaintiff’s attorneys to look into the personal medical records of a defendant physician. A doctor delivered twins, the first healthy, but the second suffered from asphyxia and was severely brain damaged. Two months after the delivery, the doctor was admitted to a mental health facility. Learning of the doctor’s health problems, the plaintiff’s attorney demanded to see the records of treatment and claimed that the information would reveal whether the doctor was “impaired” when he delivered the brain-damaged infant. The Texas Medical Association filed a brief on behalf of the doctor stating that a patient’s right to protection of medical records would be seriously compromised “if parties to a lawsuit can freely probe the supposedly secret records of their opponents by simply stating that the opponent might have some condition that contributed to the allegations.” By a vote of 8 to 1, the Texas Supreme Court ruled that the trial judge will review the records and release them to the plaintiffs “only to the extent necessary to provide relevant evidence relating to the condition alleged.”

We have only one person to blame, and that’s each other.

Now it can be told. Rude doctors get sued more than courteous ones! A study done at Vanderbilt University and reported in JAMA revealed that doctors who are rude, rush visits, and fail to answer questions are more likely to engender complaints. The patients of those doctors also reported twice as many instances of doctors’ shouting at them. Contrarily, doctors who had never been sued were seen by their patients as concerned, accessible, and willing to communicate. The point is obvious, yet needs repeating: misunderstanding and anger are often behind a patient’s complaint irrespective of the doctor’s technical ability. So, remember to speak softly, speak kindly, listen attentively, and always brush your teeth.

Rascality has limits; stupidity has not.

Bruce Vladeck PhD, head of HCFA, stated that the government may require eye surgeons to demonstrate that cataract extraction is medically necessary before Medicare will pay. Deja vu. Excuse me! Did the carriers not require such criteria just a few years ago, and did not the findings reveal that the effort was expensive and fruitless? “Surgery will not be considered necessary if the individual is able to function normally, or if the condition can be corrected with glasses,” said the director. Is it possible that what he is really saying is Medicare will refuse to pay for a second cataract if the patient has had successful surgery in one eye?

In dealing with politicians, you can be sure of only one thing: the logical solution will not be adopted.

On one hand, Congress has urged market forces to establish costs and mechanisms for medical care, but now we see the Kassebaum-Bradley Senate bill to define hospital stays for deliveries. Supporters claim the legislation will outlaw the “drive-through” deliveries of some HMOs. Entitled “Newborns’ and Mothers’ Health Protection Act of 1995” the bill is almost certain to pass in some form or other. But if it is rational for Congress to micro-manage newborns, what about hospital stays for post-op surgeries? Some patients are just not ready to jog home after hernia surgery, not to mention cholecystectomy. Do they not deserve legislation? If HMOs or other managed care plans abuse patients or fail to provide quality care, doctors’ and patients’ complaints will force appropriate change. For Congress to practice medicine is a great threat to all, both patients and doctors.

Sign in San Francisco driveway—“Visualize being towed.”

Not long ago stolen cars were recovered at a rate of 85%, but times have changed. Now the recovery rate is down to 62%, and car thieves are much more likely to sell your stolen vehicle to a chop shop where it is stripped for parts, sold to a middleman, and resold, frequently to an overseas buyer. The most popular models for theft are Honda Accord, Olds Cutlass, Ford Mustang, Toyota Camry, Chevrolet Camaro, and Cadillac DeVille. Cost to the public in 1994 alone was $7.5 billion, according to the National Insurance Crime Bureau.

Addenda

- In 1992, there were 1,455 ping-pong-related injuries requiring hospital visits.
- The cost of having Kim Basinger come to your party, $85,000; to have Pavarotti sing, $187,000.
- Most vegetarians look so much like the food they eat that they can be classified as cannibals.

Aloha and keep the faith—rts