A politician will plan to build a bridge even when there is no river.

Despite the failure of HCFA’s own pilot study, and irrefutable testimony from other sources such as the American Academy of Ophthalmology and the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery, the Clinton administration persists in resurrecting the cataract “Centers of Excellence” plan for discounted medical care. In 1994, the Clinton health reform plan predicted a savings of $110 million/year with the “centers”, but now the figure has dropped to $29 million with this Wall-Mart care. However, even that burn-budget figure will certainly fail to be reached with the projected cuts in Medicare reimbursement.

Where there's a will, there's a won't.

Police brought a rape suspect to a hospital emergency room to obtain a blood sample for evaluation. He was not a patient and did not request any medical service. Furthermore, the suspect refused to give his consent and stated he would actively resist. The doctor and other hospital personnel refused to draw a blood specimen, but they were prosecuted for “obstruction of, or interference with, the conduct of a law enforcement investigation.” The charges were dismissed when a Superior Court judge ruled that hospitals have no legal duty to obtain bodily samples from unwilling police suspects. Still, irremediable professional damage can result from the media attention when a criminal action is brought against a physician, even when all charges are subsequently dismissed. Although he was arrested, to date no charges have been brought against the Hilo ophthalmologist who wrote a legitimate prescription, but the damage inflicted to his reputation is done.

Neurosis is a communicable disease.

For decades, researchers have tried and failed to incriminate coffee drinking with increased morbidity for heart disease, cancer, and other less common ailments. However, a new study reported in the Archives of Internal Medicine involving 86,626 nurses over a 10 year period, found that coffee drinkers (two or more cups/day) had less hypertension, diabetes, and hypercholesterolaemia, and were 66% less likely to commit suicide than the baseline group. Moreover, they were less likely to take tranquilizers, and reported improvement in mood and less irritability following coffee consumption.

Any event, once it has occurred, can be made to appear necessary by a competent public relations man

Historically, the Cleveland Clinic has depended upon its tax-exempt status as an academic institution for tertiary eye care. Now, the Cleveland Clinic has entered into an exclusive ophthalmology contract with Emerald Health Network Inc. Apparently, without application or with credentialing, invitation was extended to those ophthalmologists who agreed to refer specialty eye care cases to the clinic. Other subspecialists in the community and general ophthalmologists who do not refer to the clinic, are out of the network and understandably irate. Record another victory for the managed care nabobs in their abiding design to turn doctors against one another, while they seek the lowest common denominator.

About that mysterious whooshing on Haleakala with the Playboy photo shoot

Dr James Bachman, reporting in the New England Journal of Medicine, has seen more than a dozen women with surgically enhanced breasts who experienced swishing bosom noises while at altitudes above 9,000 feet. Apparently air in the implants expands enough to allow implanted saline to slosh around. The breasts become silent at sea level, and whistling originates from other sources.

You too can be a rank insider

If you happen to have Allergan Inc. stock in your portfolio, you should be pleased at its recent rise and potential. Pharmacia-Upjohn Inc. has developed a new anti-glaucoma drug called Latanoprost which in clinical trials appeared to be more effective than Merck’s Timoptic (numero uno glaucoma drug seller). Moreover, the new drug does not have the cardiac risk inherent in the beta-blockers. Because Pharmacia needs to develop a bigger, specialized sales force to make the most of Latanoprost’s marketing potential, the word is that they want to buy Allergan. The Irvine, California, company said to be worth about $2.5 billion. Neither company is talking, but the Allergan acquisition would place Pharmacia second only to Alcon Laboratories, Inc. in global market share.

There is always someone who can make it a little worse and sell it a little cheaper

Valujet was the envy of other airlines, because of its high profit margin and $120 million in ready cash. However, at least one federal investigator had refused to fly on the airline, "primarily because they were flying old aircraft, their pilots were below grade and had limited access to training," and the management staff was thin and has not kept up with growth. Obviously, this is an airline which functions "on the cheap." Following the crash and while denying any oversight failure, the FAA hired 91 new safety inspectors. Meanwhile, in medical managed care, quality has also gone "on the cheap" with restrictive contracts, limited formularies, staff reductions, use of allied health practitioners, and other penny-pinching practices. We may not see 120 people in a 27 year old airliner decimated in a swamp, but the degradation is there, no less.

You can't make up anything any more. The world itself is a satire.

A national survey of 350 department chairs and service chiefs at various centers of academe was conducted by American Health magazine. From this meaningless exercise 1,000 “best doctors in America” were named and published. How comforting!

Addenda

❖ 50% of baby boomers say they smoked pot, but now 74% of that group say they would be upset if their children even tried marijuana.
❖ Americans spend $2 billion/year on “organic” foods.
❖ Marlon Brando’s new sitcom—My Three Chins.

Aloha and keep the faith—rts.