Only in America.

This corny story is about oily Stefano Mazzola, CEO of TriCon Associates of Hasbrouck Heights, N.J. who was arrested on racketeering charges. Allegedly, Mazzola, a reputed mafia enforcer and other members of the Genovese crime family, were paying unnamed individuals $100 for each new member signed to the HMO or PPO clients of Tri-Con. As a side action, by using his brokerage contacts, he was able to provide free medical coverage for mobster associates. What a guy; a fraudulent medical enrollment plan, free heath care for the Don and family, plus a lottery, bookmaking, and sports betting on the side.

There Ought to be a Law- and Now There is!

In a truly landmark legal decision, a state court in Idaho ruled that laser surgery is actually surgery. The outcome of this action is that wannabe eye surgeon optometrists will not be able to perform photorefractive keratectomy (PRK) just like real doctors do. Additionally, the court stated that the Idaho State Board of Optometry does not have the power to enlarge the scope of the practice of optometry. The logic of this patient protection decision will not be limited to eye surgery, but should establish a precedent for all areas of medical practice where pretenders could invade with lasers. If the wannabes had been supported by the court, we would soon see beauticians performing laser blepharoplastics, and naturopaths and chiropractors doing laser removal of vericose veins and treating skin disorders.

There is no Underestimating the Intelligence of the American Public.

Apparently the reason Joe Camel is wearing dark glasses is because the poor old droary is blind. The discovery that the use of tobacco increases the incidence and severity of age-related macular degeneration was big news for the media. Reporting in the October 9, 1996, JAMA, Seddon, et al. at the Mass. Eye and Ear Infirmary, in an epidemiologic study, found that women smokers had an AMD occurrence roughly 2.4 times that of women who never smoked. The data were slightly less provocative for males.

Showing up is 80% of Life.

The recent Hawaii Medical Association annual meeting at the Kauai Marriott was a very productive gathering of the members, visiting MDs, Delegates to the House, and spouses. If you failed to attend, you missed a fascinating and inexpensive, highly relevant educational and social event. Also, the HMA is in the process of restructuring in order to provide a leaner and more relevant organization to tighten expenditures, and provide more action. An interesting and frightening sidelight was the allegation that a physician assistant (PA) on Kauai is openly practicing medicine by using an electronic communication with a distant physician for his umbrella. Delegates were alarmed to learn that an unscrupulous doctor can lend his license to PAs, apparently without regulation, while he claims to be supervising the PA through electronics. This disgraceful medical license abuse must be investigated and prosecuted by RICO and the Board of Medical Examiners. This is still another example of incompetent pretenders not bothering with the challenging experience of earning a medical education.

Information Deteriorates Upward Through Bureaucracies.

If you didn’t already know, the Corporation for Enterprise Development in Washington D.C. surveyed the fifty states for business employment, earnings, job quality and economic performances, and Hawaii finished—dead last. That’s right, number five—oh, and that’s not a TV show. Keep that in mind when you head for the polls, and remember also that small business employs 54% of the private work force, contributes 52% of all US sales, and was responsible for 50% of the private GNP.

Everyone is, in his Own Way, Vulnerable.

A family physician in Arkansas examined a 13 month old infant and found a forearm fracture of both bones and bruises on the baby’s head. Suspecting child abuse, the doctor inquired if anyone deliberately injured the baby. The mother said no one was abusing the child, and the doctor dropped the issue and did not report her suspicions to the state Human Services Department. Three months later, the 16 month old girl was brought to a Lime Rock hospital and was pronounced dead of massive head injuries. The mother’s boyfriend was arrested and convicted of first degree murder and sentenced to life in prison. Subsequently, in a civil suit, a jury determined that the doctor had committed malpractice for failure to pursue the original suspicions, and awarded $200,000 to the baby’s estate.

We Must Live with the Ambiguity of Partial Knowledge.

In the spring of the year, a patient was experiencing dizzy spells and difficulty closing her right eye. In November, she consulted a neurologist who diagnosed Bell’s palsy. Because the condition was still present three months later, he admitted her to the hospital for diagnostic tests which revealed no abnormality. The patient did not return until the following year, at which time the doctor modified his diagnosis by saying the condition was “a bit more routine than Bell’s palsy,” but he ordered no further tests. The patient did not return to his care, but 18 months later underwent surgery to remove a tumor from her facial nerve. Because the nerve was destroyed, the patient brought a successful lawsuit against the neurologist claiming that his delay prevented any possibility of saving nerve function. The jury awarded her $800,000.

Addenda—

* Percentage of Americans who didn’t know Serbs were the groups that attacked Bosnia: 79%; who didn’t know the reason for the fighting: 68%; who didn’t know the meaning of ethnic cleansing: 66%.
* People who read the Packwood dairies can’t wait to get to the bottom of the page, which incidentally is Packwood’s problem too.

Aloha and keep the faith—rty