The Best Thing Ever to Come Out of Religion was the Music.

J. James Rowsey, MD past chairman of the University of South Florida ophthalmology department is a true believer. During his six year tour as department chief he was in regular communication with the Heavenly Father. Nothing wrong with that, of course, except that Dr. Rowsey's fundamentalist Christian theology spilled over into his medical business. He started faculty meetings with a prayer, and gave lower evaluations to nonbelievers who arrived late. He hired "born-again" Christian doctors at higher salaries and provided them with better equipment and work space. He demoted or fired staffers who were not in his "religious camp". Some faculty members strongly believe that university officials knew about the matter, but kept Dr. Rowsey on board because of his fund-raising abilities. The university Director of Health Science Public Affairs did not contest that Dr. Rowsey's behavior was inappropriate (where have I heard that word before?), but claimed the issue is more complicated, and further stated that the school had to be careful not to tread on the doctor's First Amendment rights. He claimed that no solid evidence showed that religious discrimination took place. Nevertheless the university settled one doctor's claim for violation of civil rights to the tune of $125,000, and two similar suits are pending. Dr. Rowsey stepped down as chair in October 1997, but has tenure so dismissal is practically out of the question.

Youth Thinks Nothing of Health, and Age Thinks of Nothing But.

The latest issue of Ophthalmology reported that among 750 patients with cataracts, those who took vitamin E cut the further development of cataract by 50%. An accumulation of scientific data reveals that vitamin E may be that magical fountain Ponce De Leon was searching for. It reduces the risk of developing heart disease, minimizes skin damage like scarring, sunburn, and liver spots. It appears to improve athletic and sexual performance, increases lung capacity, and also may diminish memory loss due to aging. A report in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute found that taking 75 international units per day reduced the risk of dying from prostate cancer by 41%. A JAMA study published last year found that when healthy older adults took 300 IU a day for four months they had a two-thirds boost in immune function. A 10 year study by the National Institute on Aging found that among 11,000 subjects over the age of 67, those who took vitamin E cut the risk of dying from any cause by one-third.

Peer Review is Confidential — Expect When the Court Says it Isn't....

A woman with a ruptured ectopic pregnancy was initially examined by the emergency room nurse. She failed to recognize the seriousness of the problem, and did not alert the ER physician. Due to the delay, the patient died. The hospital's peer review mechanism evaluated the event, and disciplined the nurse. The State Board of Nursing investigated the case, obtained hospital documents, and charged the nurse with professional incompetence. The family filed a lawsuit charging the nurse with negligence, and when the plaintiffs' attorneys subpoenaed the Board's files, they were given copies of the hospital documents. The hospital claimed their forms were protected under the law regarding peer review, and the district court agreed. However, on appeal the Supreme Court overruled that decision, stating "forms and documents containing factual accounts and witnesses' names are not protected simply because they also contained the peer reviewer's conclusions."

A Hypocrite is a Person Who.........But Who Isn't?

For almost 20 years, NBC's Today Show featured Dr. Art Ulene, USC School of Medicine obstetrician and gynecologist. He offered on-the-air medical advice and became one of America's most recognized and trusted physicians. In times past he advised against vitamin supplements on the Today Show, stating that research didn't justify taking them. But now the trusted doctor has seen the light. Departing the NBC show months ago, he is now seen in national television spots coming on with a message that sounds like a public service announcement. "Medical Research" has proved him wrong, and he is pitching his own line of vitamin supplements, such as Dr. Art Ulene's Optimal Formula! for Women. Many medical educators are angry, stating that it's a tremendous conflict of interest, and that he now sounds more like an advertising agency person. Dr. Ulene sees no conflict, but happily says his product line is now in 23,000 stores and selling so well that his company plans to launch other lines of Dr. Ulene nutritional products.

What this Country Needs is a Good Five Cent Cigar Extinguisher.

In the town of Sete, France, a multidisciplinary study involving epidemiologists, ophthalmologists, and biologists was conducted on 2,584 residents age 60 years and beyond. After adjustment for age, gender, cardiac disease and diabetes, current smokers had a 3.6 fold increased risk of late age related macular degeneration (AMD) compared to nonsmokers. Former smokers had a 3.2 times increased risk. Phillip Morris, R.J. Reynolds, Brown and Williamson, P. Lorillard, and their friends in the scandalous tobacco combine, drive one more stake into the heart of good health. And now, trendy magazines and television shows have attractive young people, especially beautiful women, puffing on havanas and clorsos. Another disturbing fact is that the recent acceptance of the damage settlement with various state governments does not come near the costs incurred in caring for patients with the multiple medical problems directly attributable to the noxious weed. Despite the overwhelming evidence and the immense cost to patients and families in coin and emotion, state attorneys general opted for a quick back. After all, to actually bring the complaint would involve work. The tobacco companies got away cheaply, displayed no remorse, and will continue their disgraceful promotional activities.

People Shouldn't Complain About the Cost of Medicine: Even the Latest Wonder Drug Costs no More Than the Cheapest Lexus...

As every physician knows, many elderly patients have monthly drug bills of several hundred dollars, while members of some plans pay much less. To address this dichotomy, Representative Tom Allen of Maine introduced a bill in late September which asks Congress to give Medicare recipients the same discounts on prescription drugs which are currently afforded to "favored customers," of the drug industry, which includes members of big HMO organizations and federal government agencies. The favored companies get discounts of as much as 60%, which means that outsiders pay twice as much for their prescriptions. The pharmaceutical houses let out a collective scream, and have mounted a massive lobbying blitz to kill this bill. They fear that the public is becoming increasingly outraged at high drug prices, and claim they would lose the revenue needed for research. The bill would cost taxpayers nothing. Merck's lobbyist has called on both Democrats and Republicans to kill the bill, saying "It does not deal with providing coverage or quality of care. Seniors need a proposal that provides coverage and improves care." In other words, make the taxpayers balance the issue, and let the drug industry continue to harvest their huge profits.

Y2K, A Clever Way to Say AUAUGH!!

The House Government Reform and Oversight Committee evaluated the Health Care Financing Administration regarding computer readiness for the year 2000. HCFA was given an "F," and the agency requested $141 million to remedy the failure. In the meantime HCFA decided to delay proposed Medicare payment changes to ambulatory surgical centers until after the year 2000 as potential protection against the SNAFU. If the agency fails to head off the computer glitch, Medicare reimbursement could drop 100% in about one year.

Addenda

- Others can get herpes.
- 46% of Americans say they're being left behind by "technology."
- In 1920, the average check at a diner was $0.28.
- Cowhand -- an orthopedic malady common among dairy farmers.

Aloha and keep the faith — rts