Nothing is So Deceptive of a Man’s Statistics, Expect a Woman’s Figure.

Most eye surgeons consider it the standard of practice to advise patients not to wear their contact lenses overnight. Corneal infections from that virulent, ugly bug *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* occur not rarely in patients who wear their lenses constantly. Now Bausch & Lomb has claimed a breakthrough with a lens called PureVision that is safe to wear to bed. B&L claims the lens is the result of 10 years research to produce a soft lens of new material that allows more oxygen to reach the cornea while absorbing water. The lens is more comfortable and is approved by the Food and Drug Administration for one-week nonstop wear. “It’s certainly going to be much safer than existing products,” according to the B&L director of clinical research. However, after just two weeks of promotion, B&L was sued by Johnson & Johnson who argues that the lens superiority claims were not substantiated. J&J claims that the clinical trial demonstrated “no statistically significant differences” from their own AcuVue lens. Sounds like another make-work project for the attorneys.

A Moralist is One Who Wants You to Live Life His Way.

The anti-abortion website called “The Nuremberg Files” was successfully sued for the sum of $109 million by various plaintiffs, including Planned Parenthood. A Federal jury decided that calling doctors baby butchers, posting pictures of physicians, providing their home addresses, information about their children, and even phone numbers, incited people to violence. By their action the jury limited the scope of constitutionally protected free speech, but the jury saw the posted messages on the website as a “hit list.” The message is that physicians should not have to live in fear of violence.

Three doctors on the list have been killed by anti-abortion terrorists.

If God had not Meant for us to Procrastinate, He Wouldn’t Have Created Infinity.

Our fearless (reckless?) Republican leaders should jump on the bipartisan Congressional report to fix Medicare proposed by Breaux (D.La.) and Thomas (R.Ca.lif.). The plan would save money by gradually raising the eligibility age from 65 to 67. Also, it would allow people to join the existing Medicare plan or they could use a premium allowance to purchase private coverage. It would provide prescription drug coverage for those who cannot afford their medications. The report is less than perfect (latest news is the plan is dead), but much better than the Clinton/Gore intent of merely dapping an additional $700 billion in taxes into a program that isn’t working. The Breaux proposal would fold Parts A and B into one plan (YES!), offer targeted premium allowances to the poorest seniors and encourage purchase of private insurance. The key to saving Medicare is to create a genuine health care market in which people can decide whether and how much to spend on their own medical care.

What Really Hurt Humpty Dumpty was not the Fall, but his HMO Said the Surgical Care was not Medically Necessary.

The American Medical Association is pushing for legislative language that will protect patients from the arbitrary decision of insurers to deny payment based upon “not medically necessary.” The AMA claims that patients must be given the right to appeal such decisions to an independent reviewer with clinical expertise of the proposed treatment. The scoundrels who lobby for the insurance industry are fighting the language claiming that it will raise health care costs, reduce quality and lead to increases in health care fraud! Doctors are being painted as black-hat types and “fraud and abuse would increase in the private sector if significant deference were to be conferred upon providers.” Take a few minutes and contact our Washington people in support of the AMA in this pure patient protection issue.

Nothing is so Bad that It Can’t Get Worse.

And yet another insurance insult — The Supreme Court recently supported a Pennsylvania court which ruled that workers’ compensation medical payments may be withheld during a review to determine if they involve reasonable and necessary medical treatment. Every medical care provider knows that insurance companies find any excuse to lengthen the “float” and avoid paying their bills in a timely manner. If a claim isn’t perfectly clean it will be delayed or returned for additional data, or faulted for improper numbers, or challenged for whatever. Doctors and hospitals must provide emergency care in a prompt and comprehensive manner or be subject to penalty, but no similar time constraint applies to insurance providers. Business and insurance interests claim the Supreme Court decision will help control health-care costs. Yeah, right! Thinks a lot, Judge.

Some People Smoke Between Meals, Others Eat Between Smokes.

Patricia Henley began smoking at age 15, and now at age 53 she suffers from inoperable lung cancer. Her suit against Philip Morris (Marlboro) blames the tobacco company because she became addicted after there was any warning about health risks. The California jury awarded her $1.5 million for medical costs, pain and suffering, and ordered Philip Morris to cough up (exhale?) $50 million in punitive damages. Legal experts consider the case as a marker for additional individual lawsuits despite the settlement of state Medicaid cases. For personal injury attorneys the tobacco industry must appear like a giant mother lode.

There are Two Things that Never Live Up to the Ads—Sin and Circuses.

Those creative advertising people who bring you slick offerings for Viagra the impotence drug and Claritin for allergy, have embarked on a campaign to sell cataract surgery. Allergan will place ads for six months in Time, Newsweek, Reader’s Digest and Modern Maturity, among others, to inform seniors about the benefits of cataract surgery, but specifically the implant maker wants to plug into that market with their new multifocal device. The American Academy of Ophthalmology estimates that about 13 million Americans have age-related lens opacities, but as every ophthalmologist knows that doesn’t mean they all need or would accept an operation. Moreover, the ads come at a time when HCFA is increasing scrutiny of high volume procedures and Medicare contractors and HMOs are cooling toward requests for cataract surgery.

I Have Nothing to Say, and I’m Going to Say it Just Once.

In the private practice of medicine, a day’s loss of income cannot be regained. Not merely is there loss of several hundred dollars income, but employee benefits and wages, rent, utilities, security and answering services all go on. In a solo medical practice, a holiday costs at least $900, which explains why the median for medical practices is six paid holidays per year. Some doctors offer as many as eleven, and eleven holidays a year costs a solo practitioner about $10,000 per annum.

We’re not Attempting to Circumcise the Rules.

(Professional football coach)

Worried about when to conceive your child? Get on-line with Babycenter.com The website lists dates of the Super Bowl, the World Series, the Final Four, NBA finals, the Nascar and Indy 500, etc., and then provides information on how to plan the conception of your offspring so you will not fear missing some special event. The idea was originally pitched as a joke, but sports nuts took it seriously. During Super Bowl week, the site attracted over 1,000 visitors per day.

Addenda

- DUI history - On September 10, 1897, the world’s first drunk driver drove his electric car through the entrance of a building in London.
- NASA spent $200,000 for a sanitary napkin disposal for women astronauts in 1992, and it’s money well spent.
- It is easy to enjoy opera – everything but the music.
- Aloha and keep the faith — rts ■