LIFE IN THESE PARTS...

Ninety-two year old sex offender Aloh Erickson applied for a pardon and was denied on grounds that he was still dangerous... (*KHVN News Item Jul 14*)

CONGRESS SHOULDN'T ACT ON DOCTORS' SUICIDE LAW The Honolulu Advertiser Editorial Sat Oct 23 1999

Given the profound emotional and moral issues surrounding the question of physician-assisted suicide, it is tragic that Congress is rushing to criminalize the process.

The House is prepared to vote – as early as Tuesday – on a bill that would effectively gut Oregon’s pioneering physician-assisted suicide law. It would invoke federal penalties, including license revocation, against doctors who use controlled substances to cause or hasten the death of their patients.

While this would be a neat federal end run around the Oregon law, it is the wrong way to approach this most difficult issue.

If nothing else, the law would make physicians even more leery than they already are about using painkilling drugs to keep their patients comfortable.

Physician-assisted suicide, or perhaps physician-assisted death, is but a point on a continuum of issues surrounding death with dignity.

Hawaii has taken the proper course in dealing with these issues by appointing a thoughtful committee that has tried to look at the entire issue in context. The report of the Hawaii committee is before the Legislature for consideration.

The bill pending before Congress would short-circuit that effort. It should not become law.

PROCTALGIA By Dr. John Cocker (Editor of Stitches)

Excerpts from LOONEY TOONS (In praise of eccentricity)

Eccentrics can be irritating, but they can also live up a dull day. When I was in the Air Force, the station where I was based got a call from a lady who wanted to complain about aircraft killing birds. For some reason the switchboard routed this to the medical section, where I was preparing to start a day’s work.

The caller spoke well, but at about 300 words a minute. She’d read in Time magazine that military aircraft were killing birds by ingesting them into jet engines, and so all these low-flying aircraft had to be stopped.

I waited for a pause, which finally came, and interjected, “Just a minute, you’re talking to the wrong person. This has nothing to do with me.”

Another person who kept me irritated or entertained over many years, was a patient who always came in with his elderly wife... At the end of one visit, he said this was a special day for him. Years ago he’d invented a gadget which when added to the carburetor would cut fuel consumption by 95%. General Motors had finally bought it from him and they were going downtown that day to pick up the cheque for $27 million.

Very recently a colleague told me that on a taxi ride, the driver had told him he was a retired superior court judge who’d got bored in retirement and so was driving a cab for something to do.

In the good old days, the village eccentrics were well known, and interesting members of the community. Now we say they suffer from bipolar mood disorders, put them on lithium, and make the world a duller place...

MEDICAL TIDBITS I

Relanza FDA has approved Relanza, an inhaled anti-influenza drug that cuts symptoms by one or two days. Relanza works against both Type A and Type B strains, but patients must start the drug early and continue twice daily for five days...

Food Tips for Tots: Families following the latest nutritional guides for tots (i.e. reduced fat, high fiber diets) don’t provide enough vitamins, minerals and other nutrients necessary for growing bodies...Susan Roberts (a nutrition researcher at Tufts University) and Dr. Melvin Hyman, pediatric gastroenterologist at UCSF have authored “Feeding Your Child for Lifelong Health” and point out that the kids are not getting enough iron, zinc and calcium...

Resistance Redux: A huge study in Canada concluded that 5% of S. Pneumoniae (responsible for pneumonia and meningitis) may be resistance to fluoroquinolones. Fluoroquinolones being synthetic, it has been hoped that bacterial resistance would be less...

Deprived Hearts: Researchers report that half of elderly heart attack patients (65 and older) receive neither angioplasty or clot dissolving drugs within six hours of arrival at a hospital... Hence they are twice as likely to die as those treated quickly...

Blastocyst Transfer: New technique in in-vitro fertilization... When the embryo is transferred from lab dish to the mother’s womb on the 4th day instead of the 3rd, the success rate increased...

Which End Is Up?

Last winter, one of my colleagues worked an extra-long shift in the ER. It was mid-Feb and the cold and flu season had hit hard. Sore throat after sore throat churned through the ER with rhythmic regularity. He managed only a few winks of sleep on his 24 hour stint and by the end his neural synapses were functioning sluggishly...

The following day, a young patient complained of sniffles and sore throat, but she was due for her routine pap test and had positioned herself in the stirrups... While inserting the vaginal speculum, my colleague very loudly and definitely blurted out, “Now say AAH!” Wonder who had the redder face, my colleague or the poor bewildered patient...

Stephen MacLean, MD

The Eager Fiancee

A very polite, 82 yr old male visited my office for the first time and asked me for a prescription for Viagra. I told him that it wasn’t available in Canada yet and that I wasn’t sure it was safe for him. He insisted on telling me his story: “I’ve met a woman and we’re planning to get married, but before we get married I would like to consume her.”

Jerzy Pawlak, MD

Old Age?

Mrs. J, an elderly patient came to see me. After introductions and taking her history, it was apparent her major complaint was a painful shoulder, which had been bothering her for several years and was severe enough to limit her daily activities. I asked if her previous doctor had told her what the problem was.

“He told me the X-rays showed it was just old age,” she replied.

“What was your response to that statement?” I asked.

“I told him, ‘That’s odd, my other shoulder doesn’t hurt and it’s exactly the same age.’”

Leonard A.ridge, MD

Nighttime Emergency

A blustery night in December. At 2:30 in the morning, a woman reported over the phone that her two-year-old girl had a cough and a fever. “That might be pneumonia,” I thought, and set out on a trip to the other end of the city. On examination, her chest was clear, but she had the typical rash of measles...

“She has the measles,” I told the mother.

“Oh, I know she has the measles, but I was worried she might have pinworms.”

Katherine Richter, MD

Poor Penmanship

One of my lab colleagues, a kindly gray-haired, very Christian lady in her mid-50’s, was working at the phlebotomy station of a large hospital when a nervous looking young man came in. Avoiding her gaze, he handed her a requisition. She struggled over two cryptic words scrawled on the paper, finally decoding them to read “serum anyalase.” After leaving the patient to a chair, she
saw him down and asked him to remove his coat.

"Right here, in the middle of the room?" he asked in a quavering voice.

"Yes," she replied, "I just need to take a specimen from you."

His eyes widened as she turned away to organize her test tubes.

"You're going to take my specimen?" he asked anxiously?

A bit miffed, she replied, "Of course. Don't worry, I'm very experienced at this."

Tournequet, Vacutainer and 21-gauge needle in hand, she wheeled around to face the palpil and trembling patient.

"Oh, frightened of needles, are we? Really," she said trying to comfort him, "it's just a little prick; there's nothing to worry about."

At this point, the young man gave a hoarse cry, seized his coat and ran down the corridor and out the exit, never to return. The technologist could only stare in mute astonishment.

It was only when the young man's doctor called a few days later looking for his test results that the staff realized that "..." had actually been intended to read "semen analysis."

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**MEDICAL TIDBITS II**

**SA Me**

Pronounced (SAM-me) and supposed to combat depression, ease aching joints and possibly revitalize the liver... SA Me was introduced in the US in March and is already the 4th most popular supplement in drug store chains and general retail outlets. SA Me is surpassing St. John's wort in sales... SA Me is short for S-adenosylmethionine (a compound found in every cell body) which is found in every cell of the body and plays a pivotal role in hundreds of biochemical reactions in the body as a methyl donor... Methylations reactions are important in the production of the brain's neurotransmitters and enzymes that help repair joints and the liver.

Italian researchers have documented its anti-depressant qualities. German researchers feel it helps repair osteoarthritic joints... SA Me is still a prescription drug in Europe. Minor side effects include hot, itchy ears...

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**Genes of the Heart**

Researchers have shown that direct injection of the heart with blood vessel promoting genes is safe and well tolerated and that the patients report less chest pain...

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**Ritalin**

Boys on Ritalin for ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) are less likely to abuse alcohol and other substances in adulthood...

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**Fatigue**

One survey found that 25% of patients in a doctor's office had significant fatigue, but only half actually told their physicians.

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**THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS NEW, UNABRIDGED MEDICAL DICTIONARY**

| Barium: | What you do when the patients dies |
| Urine: | The opposite of "You're out!" |
| Cauterize: | Made eye contact with her |
| Ova: | Finished; done with |
| Dilate: | To live a long time |
| Enema: | Opposite of a friend |
| Node: | Was aware of |
| White count: | The number of Caucasians |
| Hernia: | Pertaining to a female's knee |
| Fibrillate: | To tell a small lie |
| D&C: | Where Washington is |
| Bunion: | Paul's surname |
| Rectum: | Dang near killed him |
| Paradox: | Two doctors |
| Coronary: | Domesticated Yellow Bird |
| Constipation: | Endangered feces |
| Penis: | Someone who plays the piano |
| Humerus: | To tell us what we want to hear |
| Intestine: | Currently taking an exam |
| Outpatient: | A person who has fainted |
| Genital: | Non-Jew |
| Sacrum: | Holy |
| Pap Smear: | To slander your father |
| Pelvis: | The evil twin of Elvis |
| Seizure: | Roman Emperor |
| Cat Scan: | When the Secret Service looks for |

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**POTTPOURRI...**

When I was an intern rotating through urology, I asked a Scottish lady: "Does your urine burn?"

She replied, "I don't know, Doctor, I've never tried to light it."

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**Dennis Gardner, MD**

**Nepean, Ont.**

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A disgruntled 15-year-old came into the Emergency Room, having cut his finger on the meat slicer at her part-time job at a delicatessen...

In order to take the young woman's mind off her plight as I was sewing the wound, I asked her, "So what were you making when you cut your finger?"

"About $5.25 an hour," came the serious reply.

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**Chris Carter, MD**

**Toronto**

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**MEDICAL TIDBITS III**

**Protein Power:** Data on 120,000 nurses suggests that protein from poultry and dairy foods (but no red meat) reduces the risk of dying from diagnosed breast cancer... Cutting down on fat doesn't seem to make any difference...

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**Déjà vu Drug:** A major study shows that the 30-year-old drug Aldactone used with ACE Inhibitors reduced death rate from severe congestive heart failure by a third (possibly saving tens of thousands of lives a year)

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**Less Is More:** Up to one tablet of ASA/d protects against thrombolytic strokes, but 2 tablets/d doubles the risk of hemorrhagic strokes...

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**Reports on AIDS:** The HIV Prevention Conference met in Atlanta... The number of AIDS deaths has dropped 60% (Less that 20,000/yr) but the decline is slowing... However, the incidence of AIDS among Afro Americans has risen from 50% of all children in 1984 to 70% in 1988... New AIDS cases: Afro Americans: 48%; Whites: 31%; Hispanics: 20%; Others: 1%

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**Boning Up:** Reloxifene reduces the risk of spinal fractures by 50% in women with osteoporosis. Another benefit recently discovered is that the drug also reduces the risk of breast cancer by 70%...

**Hypothyroid During Pregnancy:** A recent report shows that women who are hypothyroid during pregnancy are likely to have children who score 20 points below average on standard intelligence tests...

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**From Our Readers**

The language nerds were testing another computer translation experiment, English-to-Russian. The test phrase was, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

The translation returned as: "The ghost is ready, but the meat is raw."

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**P.S.** "Best wishes from retirement and Washington—Miss you all and great friends and colleagues on Kauai."

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**FOOD FOR THOUGHT...**

"There is no wealth, but life."

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**John Ruskin**

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"Try not to become a man of success, but rather try to become a man of value."

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**Albert Einstein**

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"The highest reward for man's toil is not what he gets for it, but what he becomes by it."

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**John Ruskin**

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"There is nothing more frightening than ignorance in action."

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**Johann Von Goethe**

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HAWAII MEDICAL JOURNAL, VOL. 56, NOVEMBER 1999

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315
MEDICAL TIDBITS IV

Testicular Malignancies: Testicular cancer got a lot of press when survivor Lance Armstrong won the Tour de France bicycle race, but it is a relatively rare malignancy representing 1% of new male cancers (prostate Ca is 30 times more common). Typically, it is diagnosed between ages 30 to 35 with a 2% smaller peak over 65. The only proven risk factor is cryptorchism, which occurs in 3% of the male population. Other risk factors are family hx, HIV infections...The good news is that testicular cancer has a 5-year survival rate of 95% and 100% for cases detected early...

Catch Your Breath: A major study of 72,000 middle-aged women finds that walking briskly for 30 minutes/d cuts the risk of heart attack up to 40%.

GP Redux: In California, a survey of medical schools (1993-98) found that graduates entering primary care residencies rose from 45% to 54%.

Preemptive Strike: A new analysis concludes that prophylactic radiation of the skull in lung cancer bestows a small but significant survival advantage...

Unlucky Strokes: The risk of stroke during and after heart surgery is tripled in women and diabetics and 14 fold greater in patients with a prior history of stroke...

(Time Sep 6)

The Great Grape: Everyone knows that red wine keeps the heart healthy. It is now known that 12 oz of purple grape juice (not the white kind) per day can offset the damaging effects of LDL. Fruit juice has the same beneficial flavonoids as red wine.

Heads Up: Concussions from sports are far more prevalent than once thought. About 63,000 concussions occur among high school students mostly during football games, Dutch researchers report that 50% of all soccer players suffer concussions. A U.S. study of college football players found that two or more concussions can impair intellectual performance...Signs of concussion include blackouts, dizziness and confusion...

RAW DATA (from Playboy Oct '99)

Whine & Pine: Organization that spent the most money on political lobbying in 1997: American Medical Association ($17.28 million); runner-up: Phillip Morris ($15.8 million)


Wages: Adjusted to 1997 dollar, the minimum wage in 1961: $6.17 per hour. In 1997: $5.15 per hour. Based on a 40-hour work week, the salary of Walt Disney’s chairman Michael Eisner: $287,000 per hour. Salary of the US president: $200,000 a year. Number of years it has remained the same: 30.

MEDICAL TIDBITS V

Hear Ye: It seems that tonsillectomy and adenoidectomies done for recurring ear infections results in a slight reduction only for the first year after the procedure...

Spare the Scalpel: A study shows that examining a kid’s belly ache with ultrasound or CAT scan is 94% accurate in diagnosing acute appendicitis...

(Time Sep 27)

Chronic Pain: A poll taken by the American Pain Society reveals that 91% of chronic pain sufferers have tried at least an over the counter medicine; 60% have been prescribed NSAIDs and 42% have tried narcotics or opioids. A recent article in the Southern Medical Journal discussed anecdotal evidence that antiseizure drugs provide the best relief for neuropathic pain.

The newest and most successful has been gabapentin, which seems to relieve nerve pain from cancer and AIDS. This class of drugs has a low level of side effects e.g. drowsiness, dizziness, nausea and uniform...

Antidepressants have been used the past 20 years as adjuncts in pain relief; esp. the tricyclics for headaches, arthritis, chronic backaches, fibromyalgia, cancer pain and diabetic neuropathy...

Can That Headache: Botulism toxin is being used to smooth out wrinkles and quell tremors. Now a new benefit has been found: Botulism toxin seems to alleviate migraine HA’s. In a preliminary study...the patients whose foreheads were injected tiny amounts of Botox reported relief from migraine up to 4 months.

Boning Up: Two million American men have osteoporosis and three million more may be at risk. The first major study on men with osteoporosis shows that Fosamax used in postmenopausal women also works in men, increasing the bone density by 7%.

Time Lapse: A report shows that melatonin (5 mg and 5 mg) is no better that a sugar pill in alleviating jet lag symptoms...

(Time Oct 11)

POTPOURRI...

“My dog is cross-eyed,” the man told the vet. “Is there anything you can do for him?”

“Let’s have a look,” the doctor said, lifting the Rottweiler in his arms...

“Hmm,” the vet said. “I’m going to have to put him down.”

“Just because he’s cross-eyed?” the incredulous owner asked.

“No,” the vet replied, “because he’s heavy.”

Penguins mate for life...This doesn’t surprise me much, because they all look alike. It’s not likely they’re going to meet a better-looking penguin someday.

Kathleen Tracy in Ellen's Reader's Digest Jul '99

The income tax has made more liars in this country than the sports of fishing and golf combined...

Anonymous

“Lack of something to feel important about is almost the greatest tragedy a man may have.”

Dr. Arthur Morgan

Live neither in the past nor in the future, but let each day’s work absorb all your interest, energy, enthusiasm...

Sir William Osler

ONCOLOGY DIALOGUE KMC Oncology Conference 7-15-99

Case: 78 yr old man with prostate cancer...

Moderator: Radiotherapist Mark Kanemori: Prostate cancer is the No. 1 cancer in males in the U.S. The diagnosis and therapy is somewhat controversial...

Urologist Terry Yee: The patient had a transrectal ultrasound and volume studies...

Mark: Bone scan for mets is indicated only if the PSA is greater than 10. The question is whether the patient should be treated with radiation or surgery...

Terry: With surgery the patient has a 10 to 15 year survival...complications of surgery are impotence and incontinence. Usually I recommend radiation after age 70...

Urologist William Shiraki added: Over age 70, I too avoid surgery, but it also depends on the size and grade of the cancer...

Mark: The choice is now radioactive seed implants versus external beam radiation...

MEDICAL TIDBITS...

The Cabbage Cure: Five servings/d of veggies and fruits reduces ischemic strokes by 25% and 10 servings/d by 31%. Fruits and veggies esp. cruciferous veggies like broccoli and cabbage as well as citrus fruits do the trick...

The Colon Checkup: This year, 130,000 Americans will learn they have a tumor of the colon or rectum...

When the cancer is discovered early, the odds of living five more years is 90%. Unfortunately less that 40% of colon-rectal cancers are discovered that soon...and 56,000 people in the U.S. will die of colon-rectal cancer, making it the second greatest cancer killer after lung cancer.

Colon Cancer Checklist:

Stool occult blood annually from age 50.

Sigmoidoscopy q 5 years.

Seek treatment for changes in bowels, fatigue and anemia...

(Time Oct 18)