The Fume In The Plume Stays Mainly In The Room.

So what happens to that fragmented cell material in photorefractive surgery? Most surgical masks don’t filter below a micron, and a large amount of particles are below that threshold in the “laser plume.” Moreover, masks may be tied loosely allowing easy access for vapors, and the tendency is to remove one’s mask between cases. Meanwhile, an odorless particulate cloud may linger in the laser suite for an extended time. One surgeon noted some wheezing for the first time, while running a 10-K, and later ended up in the coronary care unit with symptoms like a heart attack. It was surmised that particles from the plume passed through the alveoli and directly into the cardiac circulation producing vasospasm. Evacuation systems vary, and with one company’s laser, often everyone in the room starts coughing and wheezing about the middle of the day. A German group analyzed the plume and found complex bioaerosols (benzene hydrocyanide, formaldehyde) - a fair number of carcinogenic molecules. No question, the ogres are everywhere.

Madness Is Rare In Individuals, But In Bureaucracy It Is The Rule.

Another punji stick in the day to day practice of medicine is Americans with Disability Act and the deaf patient. According to the statute, you must supply an interpreter at the request of a deaf patient. If you deny an interpreter you are effectively excluding that person from participation in the process of informed consent. A signing interpreter may appear with a deaf patient, and send you a bill for his/her services, as happened to one of our HOS members, even if you did not make a request for assistance.

No Prescription? No Doctor? No Problem!

How many of your patients are getting medicine on-line? As many as 400 pharmacies now operate on line providing medications at the patient’s request, no doubt led on by direct TV prescription drug ads. Many on-line drug stores recruit semi-retired, or unemployed doctors to approve prescriptions. Some are legitimate and employ registered pharmacists to answer customer’s questions, but most sites are much simpler. A questionnaire is filled out which the physician reviews, and the drug is provided. The doctor is paid perhaps $10,000 per month for part time work, or on a volume basis. The system is ripe for abuse. One reporter ordered and received Viagra for her 6 month old son, using his actual height, weight and date of birth. A Seattle newsmen got medication for weight loss, but gave data stating normal weight. An Arizona surgeon who worked for an internet pharmacy prescribed Viagra for an FDA agent who filed a complaint with the Board of Medical Examiners. The Board found that the doctor kept no records, often failed to review the questionnaire, did not bother with informed consent, and might approve as many as 1,000 Rx’s per week. The doctor was reprimanded for “unprofessional conduct” and agreed to pay a $5,000 fine, take 40 hours of pharmacy CME, and refrain from on-line prescribing. The company continues to operate. Government officials are not claiming there’s anything wrong with on-line prescriptions, but more than a dozen states have passed, or are considering, legislation to establish standards. Congress is working on a Pharmacy Consumer Protection Act.

There Is No Opinion So Absurd That Some Philosophers Won’t Express It.

The issue of stem cell research continues to plague the scientific community as the Pope, politicians, pastors, and poets, plod and persevere with the perception of procreation. The Pope did not say so in those words, but almost endorses discarding viable embryos which are not to be implanted. However, he decries using the same embryos for medical-scientific-genetic research which have the potential to generate or regenerate human organs for diseased or damaged humans. President Bush waffled his way forward with a ruling which permits federal funding of stem cell research with limitations. For those laboring in gene study, he didn’t go far enough, but the door is ajar, if not wide open, and research opportunities exist in this potentially magical medium.

What Use Is Wisdom When Folly Reigns?

On the subject of appalling legal decisions, a California jury awarded $1.5 million to “send a message” that doctors must not ignore patients’ pain. A highly respected physician was found at fault for not administering enough pain medication for an elderly, terminally ill patient. The doctor did not have an established relationship with the patient, and treated him in the emergency department. He was aware that the patient went into respiratory distress with the initial dose of morphine, and was logically cautious. At no time during the course of the hospitalization did the family or the patient request an increase in pain medication. The patient died at home after leaving the hospital and returning to the care of his treating physician. When the patient’s daughter requested that the California Medical Board investigate the case, the Board found insufficient evidence to take any action. Yet, strangely, the Board expressed to the daughter that the doctor’s pain management was inadequate. This brought media attention, a Dateline story, an offer of legal support from an Oregon based group, “Compassion in Dying,” and a discussion of JCAHO’s new subjective measurement scale (1 to 1). It was alleged his subjective pain level was between 7 and 10, but that contrasted with nurses notes which indicated effective pain management. So, a caring, intelligent, thoughtful physician got run over by the media steamroller, a thoughtless Board of Medicine, and a carefully manipulated jury. Oh gee, medical practice is a lot of fun, fun, fun.

Stupidity Can Be Astounding.

While it may seem that our system of jurisprudence often lacks common sense, the French courts have come up with a ruling that is both asinine and abhorrent. The highest court of appeal, the Cour de Cessation, has ruled that a disabled child is entitled to be compensated when the mother was not given a chance to abort the defective fetus. Lawyers for three children - one with a malformed spine, two born with only one arm - claimed that the pregnancies would have been terminated if the doctor had detected a fetal disability. Apparently, the court failed to recognize that French doctors, when detecting the slightest defect on sonogram, now must tell the patient to abort because the law has mandated it. In other words, all the handicapped should never have been born, and any imperfection must be destroyed. Dr. Mengele would be so delighted to see the Nazi aryan philosophy of eugenics becoming French law in the 21st century.

First, God Made Idiots For Practice. Then He Made School Boards.

In Ohio, a 15 year old boy and several friends created an off-campus website dedicated to skateboarding and humor. The website featured the boy and friends in humorous photos and focused on skatehoarding, videography and juvenile humor. Nothing on the site was obscene. Teachers, administrators and schools were not mentioned, yet the school officials charged the boy with “bullying,” under some idiotic zero tolerance mandate. Police were even sent to the boys home to review the tape with his parents, and could find nothing wrong with it. He was suspended for five days and placed on in-school expulsion until November. A law suit, joined by the American Civil Liberties Union, is pending against the school. This case is reminiscent of the insane New Jersey school that suspended five year olds for using their index fingers as a “firearm.” Are we in the hands of idiots, or what???

Read The Bumper Sticker.

True love can find physical expression. In Britain, a man had the message, “Connie, will you marry me?” tattooed on his buttocks. She discovered the proposal when she gave him a massage. A week later when he was returning the massage favor, he read the word, “Yes” on her backside. Hey, it’s more romantic than a tee shirt, and turning the other cheek is biblical.

ADENDA

- Ducks can sleep with one eye open.
- Lightning strikes men about seven times more often than it does women.
- The human heart beats more than 2.8 billion times in an average life span.
- Aloha and keep the faith — ra

Contents of this column do not necessarily reflect the opinion or position of the Hawaii Ophthalmological Society and the Hawaii Medical Association. Editorial comment is strictly that of the writer.