Government Has No Business Being Allowed To Invade Private Life.

In the Lawrence decision regarding the Texas sodomy law, the Supreme Court came down six to three in favor of privacy. Homosexual advocates claimed a victory for gay and lesbian rights, and conservatives in the words of Justice Scalia claimed that the court mistakenly had “taken sides in the culture war.” While those diverse extremes serve to perpetuate an ongoing morals debate, it makes good sense instead to read the words of the majority opinion written by Justice Anthony Kennedy who said, “Liberty protects the person from unwarranted government intrusions into a dwelling or other private places.” In this decision, like Roe v. Wade, the Court ruled that the individual has a right to privacy.

Money Isn’t Everything; Sometimes It Isn’t Even 99%.

Generic drugs save money, right? Yes, they are less expensive for consumers, but pharmacy middle-men are saving even more. Express Scripts, Inc, one of the four wholesalers that dominate this market, made a cool $170 profit on a single 90-pill prescription for generic Prozac. While the economy is somewhat rocky for most of us, these business people are enjoying flourishing profits with their mass buying power and ability to obtain lucrative prices with employers and health plans. Express Scripts reported a net income growth of 63% last year, and ranks third in the industry. Not bad growth for a company that only began doing business in 1986. The bottom line is that these pharmacy benefit managers (PBM - another addition to your alphabet soup), obtain drugs so cheaply, that even with a huge mark-up, these look alike drugs seem inexpensive to clients.

With Friends Like this, Who Needs An Enema?

A woman in Wisconsin had both breasts removed by mistake; an unbelievable event of negligence that speaks for itself. Dr. Harry Metropol, a plastic surgeon in South Carolina who testified before a House Judiciary subcommittee on tort reform, stated that she was not that bad off. “She did not lose her life, and with the plastic surgery she’ll have breast reconstruction better than she had before. It won’t be National Geographic, hanging to her knees. It’ll be nice, firm breasts.” His testimony was headlined by the media, and the public as well as politicians were appalled. The president of the South Carolina Medical Association was quick to say that Dr. Metropol is not a member, and that his callous, insensitive remarks were entirely his own, and not representative of any caring physician. Other local physicians noted that Dr. Metropol should have retired years ago.

"But I'll Be Done Seen By Everything When I See An Elephant Fly!"-Dumbo

The Department of Transportation says, “If mental health professionals declare that they are necessary for relieving stress and flying anxiety, animals that provide emotional support qualify as service animals.” This means that airlines have allowed pigs (yes, pigs can fly!), monkeys, Jack Lemmon’s poodle Chloe, and all manner of beasts to take to the air. Thus it was that a blind man, Dan Shaw, brought his seeing-eye guide Cuddles, for the flight from Boston to Chicago. But Cuddles is a small horse, too large for cabin class (he blocked the aisle), so he had to fly first class. Mr. Shaw claimed that Cuddles was housebroken, so he was undiapered, but the flight was delayed by 45 minutes leaving Boston, and Cuddles lost it while landing at O’Hare in Chicago. Flight attendant’s record showed “service horse in seat 3A had a bowel movement on the carpet of the bulkhead. Cabin service had to do excessive cleaning in order for aircraft to leave for the next flight. Strong odor also had to be aired out.”

Men Make Counterfeit Drugs, And Drugs Make Counterfeit Men.

While the Bush administration is dithering to provide Medicare with a drug entitlement program, the Senate actually took a step forward. With a mere 28 senators dissenting, 72 others voted to allow Americans to buy prescription drugs from Canada at cheaper prices than they can get in the U.S.A. The always greedy pharmaceutical industry has persistently tried to find ways to stop U.S. citizens from crossing the border to purchase their medications. They claim the foreign drugs may be misrepresented, mislabeled and are not controlled. Moreover, the drug manufacturers claim they need that extra cash to fund R&D, but the disgraceful part is that the money comes almost entirely from elderly patients, many of whom are on fixed incomes.

Industry analysts say that traffic to Canada and Mexico to purchase drugs tops $650 million each year.


Kenneth Lay - stole millions from stockholders, bankrupted a company. No indictment. Moral?

Endovascular Technologies of Menlo Park, California, pleaded guilty to 10 felonies involving their Ancure “stent-graft” device, used to treat aneu­rysms. The criminal complaint alleged that the company misled the Food and Drug Administration, and reported only 172 malfunctions. Actually the company had records of 2,628 malfunctions including 12 incidents that led to death, and 57 cases which required open heart surgery. The company claimed that none of the 18,000 patients who have the Ancure grafts is in danger because the unreported problems occurred during surgery. How comforting.

Sometimes I Think There Is No Reason To Get Out Of Bed. Then I Feel Wet, And I Know There Is.

How about a toilet seat that reads a person’s vital signs? Research technologists at the University of Bristol in Britain have presented research last month that affords an effective means of detecting viral and bacterial GI infections. The toilet seat is just the first step (don’t step in that!) toward the ultimate goal of a smart technology that can diagnose GI disorders. According to the Reuters news account, investigation continues on production of a low-cost device about the size of a shoe box, that would merely require patients to emit a simple “flatus sample” instead of providing a stool specimen. It’s an ill wind that —


Attorney General John Ashcroft whom some call the most dangerous man in America, fresh from his disgraceful marijuana victory in the notorious Rosenthal case in California, is pursuing the Oregon law on physician assisted suicide (PAS). The approach is not to argue about the relative merits of “death with dignity,” but to declare that the Attorney General can ban the use of narcotics for the purpose of inducing death. The issue is much more than Oregon’s PAS law, because by extension, a ruling in the AGs favor would allow the federal government to overrule state laws in any social decision he disagreed with.

Free Speech Is A Tricky Issue And Cannot Be Taken Too Literally.

Doctors holding themselves out as medical experts are now being more carefully scrutinized. The American Association of Neurological Surgeons suspended members after they were found to have provided “unprofessional testimony.” One suspended physician brought suit against the Association, challenging the suspension. The U.S. District Court refused to intervene in the business of a private organization, and the Appellate Court agreed stating, “it is well known that expert witnesses are often paid handsome fees, and common sense suggests that a financial stake can influence an expert’s testimony.” Additional appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court was ignored by the high tribunal. And that’s a solid kick in the privates for our “doctor hoi.”

ADDENDA

Hamsters can wink.

Car maintenance is $3.56/mile in Bismarck, N.D. In Honolulu car maintenance is $5.49/mile.

According to Niagara Spray Starch, 46% of males and 34% of females iron in the nude.

Powergen, an Italian power company, now admits they were somewhat careless in naming their website, Powergenitalia.com

Aloha and keep the faith —rts

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