A Pure Heart Is A Good Thing. So Is A Clean Shirt.

At the New York Hospital Medical Center in Queens, a study was done of 42 doctors and other clinicians who wear neckties, to determine if they carry pathogens. The report presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Microbiology found that almost half the cravats were found to be contaminated with bacteria which cause pneumonia, urinary tract infections and sepsis. A comparison with tie-wearing security guards found that the clinicians’ ties were eight times more likely to be contaminated. Seriously ill patients may cough on neckties, or the ties may come in direct contact with patients or bed linen, and the doctor unknowingly becomes a reservoir for disease. Moreover, neckties are not laundered frequently like other wearing apparel. Therefore, if you are one of those docs in proper professional attire, don’t forget to run your neckties to the cleaners. Those of us in aloha wear or bow ties need not worry. Another study found 13 out of 15 stethoscopes were contaminated with ugly bacteria. So, all of us need to wipe off our scopes with an alcohol sponge between patients.

Time May Be A Great Healer, But It’s A Lousy Beautician.

Thanks to so-called reality TV shows like Fox’s The Swan and ABC’s Extreme Makeover, patient’s are visiting plastic surgeons in increasing numbers. While this may sound wonderful to some cosmetic cutters, in fact, the patients’ expectations are often unrealistic. The one hour shows (less commercials) depict changes that often have evolved over weeks to months. Moreover, initial photos are often taken at unflattering angles and in poor light to further accentuate post operative improvement. Some patients even show up with a shopping list, including breast augmentation, liposuction, thigh reduction, face lift, brow botox, nose bob, and even butt lift. According to the American Academy of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, since the TV make-overs, elective traffic has increased by one-third.

Every Cigarette Eventually Meets Its Match.

In 2000, Philip Morris introduced a cigarette called Merit. The claim was made that due to a special process, the cigarette was less likely to cause a fire. This is an important promise since 25% of fire deaths in the United States ultimately are caused by cigarettes. Philip Morris claimed that Merit was “less likely to ignite certain fabrics, and the cigarette may even put itself out in an airstream.” A problem arose when the scientist who was to analyze the new product, found that it was more, not less, dangerous in causing fires. While smoking the cigarette, bits of glowing tobacco would drop off the end, burning clothing or furniture. Philip Morris took the usual tobacco industry avenue to correct the problem, they fired the scientist! Now, the Justice Department has brought a broad civil-racketeering suit accusing Philip Morris of deceptions intended to cover up the dangers of smoking.

For Medical Science Do I Trust The Institute Of Medicine Or A Congressman?

Cause and effect is a powerful genetic mechanism in the human brain. If a child becomes autistic following an immunization shot, it follows that the shot caused the autism. This is not true! A panel for the Institute of Medicine urged researchers to cease trying to link vaccines as a cause for autism. The IOM study said it found no link to childhood vaccines, and stated that such claims “lack supporting evidence and are theoretical only.” A large-scale Danish study covering 537,303 children in Denmark from 1991 to 1998, found no relationship between MMR vaccine and autism. Marie McCormick M.D. Harvard Professor of maternal and child health who headed the IOM panel, stated that she was ready to vaccinate her children without fears of autism. Still, Representative Dan Burton of Indiana, whose grandson was diagnosed as autistic around the time he was vaccinated, claimed such studies are “bunk.” He has been wrong about other things too.

An Erection And Good Judgement Are Inversely Related.

Ah, those Swedes! On emergency call, a non-governmental organization called Swedish Organization for Sex Education will dispatch a “condom ambulance.” Acting on the premise of preventing unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, the company’s white ambulance with a red rose painted on the side, will respond promptly to deliver a 10-pack of condoms when a couple locked in the heat of passion find themselves without adequate protection. The ambulances will serve in Stockholm, Malmo and Gothenberg, and will be ready to respond between four in the afternoon and nine at night. The marketing manger for the company, Carl Oswald, stated that STDs are rapidly increasing in Sweden, and not enough young people are using protective condoms. What’s next? A Viagra Wagon rushing to elevate the spirits of ED fellows?

Between Time And Ourselves, It Is A Struggle As To Which Shall Kill The Other.

So what else is new? A survey of African-American physicians taken by the Journal of the National Medical Association (representing about 25,000 MDs) found that 80% were retiring or planning on early retirement. Primary complaints were about the low reimbursement, high liability insurance costs, and bad treatment by managed care plans. Across the board, doctors expressed frustration and a “loss of joy” in their chosen profession. What should have been obvious, differences in race mean nothing. It is medical practice that unites us, and we are being dumped on. Authors of the survey expressed great concern about the loss of skilled practitioners and the potential for a major crisis in access to care. The simple fact is that our medical system is cracking with collapse pending if reimbursements remain so low. Hospitals are closing, emergency rooms are being abandoned, physicians are refusing to take emergency call, and physician morale is deteriorating across the board.

No Parking Is Allowed On The Straight And Narrow.

Global positioning system (GPS) is an incredibly accurate navigation system, based upon satellites circling the earth. It has the potential to be a valuable device for dispatching emergency vehicles, but also can be used as a snooping tool for eavesdropping. In New Jersey, GPS devices were attached to cars of unsuspecting police officers, and the results were not pretty. One activity log claimed a check on a residence, cemetery and cluster of car dealerships, when the GPS had the cruiser parked in a McDonald’s lot. Some officers spent extra time over meals, donuts and coffee, and others parked in lots instead of being on highway beats. Now three officers are suing to get their jobs back, claiming that idling was a department wide practice. Big Brother has more and better tools to poke into our lives, both public and private.

Just What We Need! An Economy Model Humvee.

It sounds a little goofy, but now the big time auto manufacturers are building gas-electric hybrid SUVs. The Toyota Highlander and its upscale model Lexus RX 400h will have a V-6 engine which will run on gasoline or electricity and get 27+ miles per gallon, Ford’s Escape hybrid will roll along at 35 to 40 mpg in stop and go city driving. The precise economy performance remains to be specified, but environmentally devoted motorists can take some comfort while rolling along in a two ton vehicle.

ADDENDA

- Twelve states (not Hawaii) have now opted out of the Medicare rule requiring physician supervision of certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs).
- According to a recent JAMA study, stringent state auto licensing laws, e.g. vision test, road test, and shorter licensing period, were not associated with benefits regarding motor vehicle fatalities.
- 80% of e-mail is spam.
- In Wyoming, the legislature is considering a bill to make it illegal to toss a bottle of urine out a vehicle window.

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.