



Privacy: Something We Give To Others To Keep For Us.

Now this is downright scary. A particle as small as a grain of rice is currently on the market, and can be implanted in products, animals or humans to establish identification or monitor inventory. Called RFIDs (radio frequency identification capsules), a company called Applied Digital Solutions expects that RFIDs will replace credit cards, medical bracelets and even keys. The possibilities are endless. Medically, the potential to tag drugs, records, track pharmaceuticals and even patients can be of great value. However so far, privacy cannot be managed. They already are in use to allow drivers to pass through toll booths; libraries in San Francisco plan to use RFIDs to allow patrons to check themselves out; entomologists tag insects to study behavior; the federal government implanted 10 million RFIDs in salmon to study spawning and in Oklahoma a Wal-Mart store sold Lipfinity lipstick tagged with RFIDs (they were instructed to cease and desist). Now, a program called VeriKid has been launched in Mexico and Brazil to allow parents to implant RFIDs in their offspring. If you act now, you can save \$50 off the \$200 list price if you preregister to get chipped at 4verichip.com. Usually the implant is between elbow and shoulder on the right arm. Somehow I don't think a line will be forming to get chipped.

"We Are Losing Money Each Flight. Increase The Volume!!"

Hawaii has an inter-island emergency air transport service, but only at the generous participation of the owner Andrew Kluger, the CEO. Hawaii Air Ambulance has an exclusive agreement to serve the state regardless of the patient's ability to pay, but in the last seven years, only two years have gained a profit, totaling about \$225,000. Mr. Kluger has shown his determination to continue the service by purchasing a Cessna 414A to add to the fleet following the February crash of an aircraft going into Hilo at night in heavy weather. Most of the company's revenue comes from Medicaid and Medicare, and from out of state patients. People think they are a state agency and don't have to pay, so the company is trying to collect from about 400 clients with outstanding indebtedness. "We lose money on at least 1/2 of our flights," Kluger stated. Governor Lingle authorized the release of \$1 million in July to assist air ambulances, but it went to aid helicopters, not inter-island transport. The state has refused to provide any subsidy to keep the service going, and uses the lame excuse that "if the state started subsidizing the service, air ambulances would come out of the woodwork," according to Department of Health manager of emergency services Donna Maiava. The truth is obvious; as long as Hawaii Air Ambulance is willing to operate at a loss, the Legislature and the DOH will look the other way.

Progress Was Okay Once, But They've Gone Too Far.

The military has developed infrared technology which affords much improved night vision for troops, weapons use and reconnaissance, as well as vehicles and even aircraft. Now Lexus, Cadillac and Hummer are using the same technology to allow drivers who want to be really safe, to add that option on their new vehicles. Some systems project a small picture on the windshield that gives the motorist a much better view of what is coming down the road. What a fantastic addition to help my wife "back seat" drive after dark.

Medical Liability - Teach It In Medical School.

An article in Quality and Safety in Health Care compared seven years of malpractice claims in Florida, Indiana and Maryland. Over 96% of physicians who had been sued came from schools whose graduates had a higher than average number of suits filed against them. New institutions and public universities produced doctors who are more at risk. There appeared to be no common denominator, but researchers theorized that some schools may offer a poorer quality of clinical education, or (more likely) may draw from less-qualified students. As has been reported, medicine is not the career choice it once was, and the number of applicants to medical schools is decreasing.

There Is Nothing New Under The Sun. Ecclesiastes

The National Board of Medical Examiners and the Federation of State Medical Boards have collaborated to establish an additional step to the licensing process. In an attempt to evaluate bedside manner and clinical skills, an addition to part two of the exam will require students to see 10 patients (actually actors) and spend 15 minutes with each. Supposedly, the test will determine their ability to establish communication, gather information and plan examination and diagnosis. Scoring method is still

a secret. The test is actually a resurrection of the old exam some of us geezers took 40 years ago, which was discontinued in 1964. The AMA and the American Medical Students Association are in opposition claiming it is redundant, and that medical schools already provide this training during third and fourth years of medical school. The addition will include \$975 more onto the already substantial \$1500 exam fee. The licensing people ignored complaints and have stated that the new clinical skills test is here to stay as a matter of "patient safety."

Some Doctors Must Learn To Leave Bad Enough Alone.

At the June meeting of the AMA House of Delegates, South Carolina surgeon J. Chris Hawk offered a resolution to refuse care to plaintiffs' attorneys involved in malpractice litigation. The media were delighted to give the issue nationwide attention with letters pouring into USA Today and other papers abusing the medical profession. Doctors were accused of greed, duplicity, deceit and hypocrisy, to mention a few adjectives. Typically, no paper or TV outlet bothered to mention that the resolution was greeted with hooting and outrage by other delegates, and was soundly defeated. So, thank you, Dr. Hawk, for making us all look like petty, self interested jerks.

Parenting Is Hazardous The Second Time Around.

The Gerontologist surveyed 3260 grandparents in the USA and found that 60% are involved in managing grandchildren. 5.3% are full time caregivers, 23% manage children from 1 to 9 hours/week, and 31% manage their offspring from 10 to 30 hours/week. The significance of this is that Harvard University researchers found a 57% greater risk of heart disease among grandmothers who care for their grandchildren. Moreover, more grandparents are living with their families, suggesting more babysitting duties. Between 1990 and 2000, the Census showed an increase of 30% in the number of children living with grandparents. The experts hypothesize that stress is a major factor, and grandmothers may have less time to care for themselves; get check-ups, enough sleep or enough exercise. In any case, we should try to let granny live her own life, and make parenting a one-time life duty.

It's The Food, Stupid!

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Americans are eating more than they did 30 years ago. In studying the eating habits of people ages 20 to 74 when compared to 1971, the CDC found that women consume 22% more calories (1542 up to 1877) while men increased 7% (2450 up to 2618). The major increase is in simple carbohydrate consumption, especially salty snacks, soft drinks, pizza, as well as eating out more often. The data were collected in personal interviews in which subjects were asked to recall everything they had eaten in the previous 24 hours. According to Barry Popkin, M.D. Professor of Public Health at Univ. of North Carolina School of Medicine, it takes only 3500 extra calories spread over 10 days to add a pound. Of course, obesity is a complex issue, and other factors, such as life style, make a difference, so let's stop at Krispy Kreme and talk it over.

As Chicken Little Said...

According to Tom Ridge, director of Homeland Security, we are a "nation in danger," so in some east coast areas he raised the color coding threat level to bright orange. However, the rest of us are in serious danger from some other threats closer to home, more real and imminent. For example, the ever-alert Los Angeles City Council is considering a ban on the use of Silly String in public; a compact disc is being reissued of John Kerry's prep school rock band, the Electras; and most frightening, auditions are underway for a new "Partridge Family." What color alert would be appropriate - magenta? taupe? ecru? lilac? beige?

ADDENDA

❖ In Glasgow, Scotland, a man tried to siphon diesel fuel from a parked RV. Unfortunately, he placed the hose in the septic outflow and suffered GI upset after sucking in "fuel."

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.