



## **When giving medical advice, know what you are talking about.**

Beck Weathers, MD, age 49, a Dallas pathologist and mountain climber, underwent radial keratotomy surgery two years ago specifically to avoid wearing glasses which tend to fog or ice over at high altitudes. He was told there would be no problem. However, on an Everest expedition last spring, the team was trapped by a storm, and eight of the world's most accomplished climbers died. Dr Weathers appeared to be dying, but rallied after several hours. He lost his nose, all of one hand and most of the other due to frostbite. He has lost so much vision at 26,000 feet that he could neither continue the ascent nor descend to base camp, and had to be led down the mountain. He was so hopelessly impaired that every 10 meters or so he would step into thin air and had to be caught by his rope. In the June 1993 *American Journal of Ophthalmology*, Lawrence J. White, MD reported that after 24 hours at altitudes above 9,000 feet, the eyes of patients who have had radial keratotomy undergo a hyperopic shift. PRK patients and controls did not change.

## **And if there is mucosal damage to the nasal septum—?**

Since the Presidential days of Dwight Eisenhower, the health of the President has been a matter of public record, that is, until President William J. Clinton. Ike's heart disease, Kennedy's Addison's disease, LBJ's gall bladder, Carter's hemorrhoids, Reagan's rectal polyps, etc, were revealed to the media, nearly to the point of, "Oh, puhlease!" So, why should a President who claims to be young and vigorous, fail to reveal his medical records and put a muzzle on his physician (E. Connie Mariano, a Navy internist)? Bob Dole's health records are open to all, and the history of presidential health problems demonstrates (W. Wilson and FDR) that the public has a right to know. As with so many other factors and events with this administration, candor is not on the list of obligations.

## **As the Pope said to Henry VIII, "No problem. Beheading's fine, it's just divorce that makes me nervous."**

The guilty doctor would probably lose his license, and might go to jail for false billings to Medicare, but the really big cheats write a check and walk away. In this case Smith Kline, is about to close a deal to pay \$300 million to settle allegations that it falsely billed Medicare for blood tests performed by its clinical labs business. These are just minor administrative errors, right?

## **Why doesn't the FDA protect us from Dr Quinn, Medicine Woman?**

The Food and Drug Administration, staunch protector of the American public, has come down hard on what it termed "illegal use of excimer laser systems that do not have FDA approval." Some surgeons, exhausted with delays in the FDA review process, re-imported devices previously used in Europe. Stephen Trokel, MD, speaking on behalf of the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery (often referred to with the nematode acronym, ASCRS), expressed displeasure with the glacial velocity of the FDA. Many doctors believe that our technology is being exploited by other countries while the FDA attempts to micromanage medicine by trying to control all the details of technology development.

## **"No woman should go outside of her home without a machine gun."**

In Texas, Mary Klager had her silicone breast implants removed which were stored with her attorney, the Texas King of Torts, John O'Quinn. The implants were simply placed in a Tupperware style container and placed with other tissue in the law office's keeping (This is legal?). The law firm sent the implants and tissue samples for pathology testing, which uncovered evidence of breast cancer. Ms. Klager had a bilateral mastectomy only to find out that she did not have cancer at all. She tried to sue the law firm, but the case was dismissed by Judge Carolyn Johnson, who has accepted campaign contributions from the powerful attorney. However, the Texas Court of Appeals overturned the judgement, stating, "We recognize that the law firm had no duty to have Klager's tissue samples tested, but as custodian it has an obligation to insure that the samples being tested correspond to the individuals to whom the test results are given."

## **Every cause produces more than one effect.**

Of course, enlarged prostates are not a problem for eye surgeons especially since Proscar has come on the scene. But now, reports show that patients taking this drug have the highest rate of gynecostasia among the various compounds that produce this undesirable side effect. It remains to be shown if the drug actually can cause breast cancer, although two cases have been reported. Still, the risk might be acceptable for those transvestites who desire a B cup.

## **Progress is based upon a universal innate desire of every organism to live beyond its income.**

The latest electronic doodad option for your luxury car is the GPS, or global positioning system. Through satellite technology, a receiving device currently in wide use for aircraft, will locate the vehicle within 100 feet of its site. If the care breaks down, gets lost, or crashes, the driver can activate an emergency button to call for assistance with an automatic cellular phone. Cost, about \$2000. If you elect to buy the system on your own, the portable GPS receiver costs between \$300 and \$800 depending upon sophistication, and you probably already have the cellular phone.

## **Social planners could use some basic instruction.**

While the social architects want Hispanic children in America to be taught in their native language, 81% of the parents of those children went their offspring taught "English as soon as possible." Most Russian, Korean and Chinese, et. al., immigrant children receive intensive English instruction, but not Hispanics. Somebody finally got around to asking the parents of the Hispanic children how they want their children educated. What a surprise!

## **Addenda—**

- ❖ Average distance between conversational partners in the U.S. is 18 inches; Japan 2 feet; Mexico 12 inches.
- ❖ Don't use a big word where a diminutive example will prove sufficient.

Aloha and keep the faith—rts.