



❖ **YOU HAVE HEALTHY BEAUTIFUL EYES. LET'S OPERATE ON THEM!**

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved the implantable accommodative lens for use after cataract surgery. The lens is equipped with hinges which permits the eye to adjust depth of focus, and thus avoid reading glasses. It is more expensive, but Medicare has ruled that doctors and facilities may charge the patient for the additional amount. Now some bold eye surgeons are using this implantable lens off label, and are operating on normal eyes with a procedure called "clear lens extraction" for presbyopic patients. Not content with the slash and burn laser treatment for refractive errors, now we have surgeons putting healthy eyes at risk for infection, inflammation, or possible retinal detachment by replacing a normal lens with a synthetic. The promise is that the patient will no longer need any optical appliance. Cost varies around \$4,000 to \$5,000 per eye. Read the informed consent form very carefully.

❖ **LASIK HASTE MAKES MALPRACTICE WASTE.**

A 32 year old investment banker, graduate of Yale University and Wharton School of Finance, responded to the advertisement and had lasik surgery. Instead of the desired result, the surgery caused distorted and blurred vision, and he was unable to continue with his occupation. He claimed that TLC Laser Eye Center, a nation-wide chain, the "McDonald's of Lasik" (plaintiff attorney's description), failed to diagnose his keratoconus, and the resulting lawsuit brought a record judgment of \$7.5 million. The previous top lasik liability figure was \$4 million awarded to the airline flight officer who lost his pilot's license because of inability to see well at night following lasik surgery.

❖ **LIFE IS NOT A STRUGGLE BETWEEN GOOD AND BAD, BUT BETWEEN BAD AND WORSE.**

Experts in vascular disease estimate that 15,000 Americans die each year from aneurysms, but the number may be far larger since many people who die suddenly are categorized as heart attack victims who may well have had a ruptured aneurysm. It takes an act of Congress to approve a screening test under Medicare. Senator Chris Dodd (D-Ct) and Jim Bunning (R- Ky) have sponsored a bill which sets out categories of older people who would be screened and reimbursed by the Medicare insurance program. Categories would include risk factors such as family history, atherosclerotic disease, high blood pressure, or smoking. However, that would omit screening for healthy people who are possibly just as vulnerable. If Congress decides to screen the Medicare population for aneurysm, then just do it, and forgo the whimsical parameters.

❖ **IF YOU'RE NOT OUTRAGED, YOU'RE NOT PAYING ATTENTION.**

And now the latest acronym to join the alphabet soup of medical jargon is P4P, which stands for pay-for-performance. As if the Feds were not already pushing physicians toward non-par with SGR, RVRBS, DRGs, HIPAA, EMTALA, HMO, yada-yada, now CMS seems determined to construct a system which will reward certain physicians and facilities for doing the right thing. Like so many government directed plans, there is a built-in belief that many doctors and facilities are gaming the system, failing to provide care, over-coding, or whatever. Bovine droppings!! The overwhelming majority of physicians are skilled professionals who take pride in their work and do their best, sometimes despite the interference of CMS and other payers. Many physicians are already considering opting out of federal programs due to multiple burdens, plus the absurd SGR (sustainable growth rate) reimbursement formula. This so far undefined P4P is one more straw. What we truly need is a system to assure quality work and ethics in our politicians and the bureaucrats who are purported to be public servants.

❖ **DRIVE CAREFULLY. DON'T INSIST ON YOUR RITES.**

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 25% of auto-related fatalities are due to driver distraction. Driving distractions have been a problem since Henry Ford filled the streets and highways with model Ts. For many years, it was eating, drinking, or worrying about the kids in the back seat. In the 21st century, the causes for inattention have become horrendous. Besides the kids and food, now we have radios, cds, DVD players, cell phones (with camera and text messaging), lap top screens, computer games and dashboard videos. Eighteen states, including Hawaii which has no existing law, have legislation pending to pull the

plug on many of these devices, and to define clearly the limitations and obligations of the driver.

❖ **IT'S EVEN HARDER FOR THE APE TO BELIEVE HE WAS DESCENDED FROM MAN.**

Senator Bill Frist, majority leader of the Senate, and in another life a very successful cardiac surgeon, graduated from Harvard University. To his credit, he went against his boss, the President, by espousing support for stem cell research. As a medical scientist, he could hardly do otherwise, but now he has jumped to the other side of the fence and endorsed "intelligent design" as a method of earthly creation for instruction in schools. He stated that he sees no contradiction in his stand. Intelligent design is the current phrase for biblical story-telling of how the earth and its creatures came about. Please wake up, Senator, especially if you plan to run for president in 2008, because intelligent design is a matter of faith and should not be taught in public schools.

❖ **ALCOHOL IS LIKE SUCCESS. BOTH ARE OKAY UNTIL THEY GO TO YOUR HEAD.**

It is almost a cliché in this 21st century that the consumption of moderate amounts of alcohol improve one's health, and a glass of red wine is purported to reduce the risk of heart disease. Professor Arthur C. Brooks at Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, wanted to determine if the use of alcohol equated with earnings. His data showed that people who consumed a moderate amount of alcohol (up to two drinks a day) earned 10% to 25% higher wages when compared with non-drinkers. Contrarily, research shows that beyond two drinks per day wages begin to fall. Additionally, when asked to collect data regarding charity, Dr. Brooks found that on average, non-drinkers give away \$1100 per year, while the average moderate drinker donates \$1200 annually. Beyond three drinks per day, the boozer donates an average of \$230 per year. So, have your cocktail in the evening to hype your income, and remember you're doing it for a good cause as well.

❖ **IDEAS WON'T KEEP – SOMETHING MUST BE DONE ABOUT THEM.**

Nothing new under the sun you say? CamelBak Products, a tiny company in Petaluma, California, designed a water-filled backpack with a tube extending to the mouth, primarily for use by bikers and climbers. In 2000, a customer and former fighter pilot Chuck Hunter, sensed an emerging market for the device, the desert based military. He quit his job with Lockheed, joined the company and ultimately became the company's senior VP for government, military and industrial business. In the intervening years, Camelbak has become a world leader in hydration systems. The Pentagon placed a \$17 million dollar order, to provide a Camelbak system for all soldiers heading to Iraq and Afghanistan. Fifty foreign nations have requested the product, and even before the London bombings, Britain approved money to equip police and first responders with the system to keep drinking water safe in a chemical or biological attack.

❖ **JUST ONE LAST TRIP DOWN THE INTERSTATE.**

In Dallas, Texas, a woman swerved her car to avoid a large object on the freeway. She thought it was a big box, but when she saw feet sticking out of the container she became alarmed. It was found to be a body strapped on a Gurney en route to a funeral home. Apparently the driver failed to latch the rear door of his vehicle, and the Gurney rolled out. He later retrieved the body and continued on to his destination, probably just before the body called a cab.

ADDENDA

- ❖ Shakespeare invented the word "eyeball."
- ❖ A human blink takes 0.3 seconds.
- ❖ It is unethical for lawyers to have sex with their clients because it amounts to double billing.
- ❖ Chaos, panic, disorder! My work here is done.

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.