



## **We Have Only Ourselves, And One Another. That's All There is.**

In 1996, 47 thousand students applied for entry to American medical schools. By the year 2002, that number had dropped substantially to 35 thousand, a decrease of almost 27% over a mere six years. Moreover, for the first time, more women than men applied, as 50.8% of applicants were female. Willarda Edwards, MD, Chair of the AMAs Women Physicians Congress, said one reason is that more women are interested in studying sciences as they progress through school. That may be so, but what accounts for the obvious decrease in total applicants, especially males? It seems logical to assume that many accomplished students no longer view medicine as a desirable profession. Also, without question, fewer young people are seeking a profession which has become so heavily regulated. While the increase in women candidates is encouraging, the big picture is not a pretty one.

## **There Are Three Certainties In Life — Death, Taxes, Another Diet Book.**

Robert Atkins, M.D. has become more famous in death than he was in vivo. As an anti-carbo guru, the doctor wrote a book pushing for a diet long in fat and protein, which produced a measure of success in reducing waist lines. He traveled and gave speeches about his good health and eating habits. Controversy arose after his death when the New York medical examiner reported that Dr. Atkins weighed 258 pounds, and had a history of heart disease, congestive heart failure and hypertension. Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, a vigorous, vibrant, vegetarian's venue, and long time critic of the Atkins diet, were quick to jump on the report. They sent the ME's summary to the Wall Street Journal where it was published, and then the stuff hit the fan. Susan Trager, chairman of the Atkins Physicians Council, Dr. Patrick Fratellone, Atkin's cardiologist (also an Atkins diet proponent) and Atkin's widow, all rushed to repudiate the ME's data. With reason, they were upset about lack of confidentiality, and they claimed that his weight ballooned with fluid overload in ICU care. Also, his physician said that he had cardiomyopathy, not arterial disease. It's a pretty grim world when you can't even get laid away in peace.

## **Hospitals — Welcome To The 20th Century!**

Bar code electronics have been in other industries for many years, and at last medicine is getting on board. In one great bold step into the world of medical technology, Mark McClellan, M.D., commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, stated that patients will be given bar code bracelets within two years. The code will tie into a computer system which can be scanned to determine the right medicine, the right dose at the right time, and any conflicts with the patient's medical record. McClellan estimates that 500,000 adverse events and transfusion errors will be prevented over a 20 year period. It's about time!

## **Life Is Not Going In Circles — It Is A Downward Spiral.**

The inspector at Hartsfield-Jackson airport in Atlanta was suspicious of a smoky odor emanating from a suitcase of a passenger arriving from Cameroon. He opened the bag and found an entire smoked monkey! The woman claimed the meat was intended for a traditional wedding reception of some African immigrants. An international treaty prohibits importation of non-human primates. From New York to Honolulu, inspectors are reporting similar findings as the market for "bushmeat;" mostly from Africa, is increasing. "We are probably seeing only the tip of the iceberg," according to the wildlife agent in charge in Atlanta. A report in JAMA last year, warned that monkeys in Cameroon are hosts to a number of viruses, including some that are close cousins to the AIDS virus. Too often, suspicious shipments slip by because the CDC, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Department of Agriculture and the FDA, cannot agree on which agency has jurisdiction. Low land gorillas and chimpanzees are harvested by the thousands, and not rarely end up on the dinner tables in Europe. The bushmeat trade is devastating African wildlife where as much as 5 million tons of bushmeat are extracted each year, according to the London Zoological Society. Bon appetit!

## **All Solutions Breed New Problems.**

Amidst the ongoing angst regarding jobs leaving the United States for overseas labor, one occupation should be considered inviolate -- medical

transcription. It isn't. This problem came to bear when a foreign transcriber threatened to place patient's medical data on the internet, if the transcriber was not paid for work already accomplished. With information such as names, social security numbers, addresses, and laboratory and imaging reports, a whole host of problems could ensue if these reports are not well protected. The threat of identity theft and other legal ramifications readily come to mind. In California, legislation has been introduced to prevent HMOs, hospitals and medical offices from sending confidential information abroad for transcription. Sometimes the world gets ugly in ways we never imagined.

## **A Pedestrian Is A Man With Two Vehicles — One Driven By His Wife, The Other By One Of His Children.**

The first ATVs (all terrain vehicles) came along in the 1970s, and were used primarily by ranchers and foresters to navigate rough terrain. They were three-wheelers with small engines, and difficult to handle. In the 1980s they began to be used for recreation, but many injuries (and law suits) resulted. Manufacturers quickly moved to a four wheel model, beefed them up (some models will go 70 mph) and began to market them for "family recreational activity." In 2002, 825,000 ATVs were sold in the United States. Regulation is minimal, and serious injuries and deaths are now a serious public health problem. Only 10 states require a driver's license, 34 states ban their use on paved roads (frequently ignored), 18 states set a minimum age of 12, Utah allows 8 year olds to operate ATVs, and West Virginia which has the highest per capita ATV death rate, has debated rules for 7 years, but passed none. Since 1992, 1/3 of reported injuries were to children under age 16, while 14% of deaths were children under age 12. ATV injuries to children are 12 times more likely to be fatal as bicycle accidents, according to the National Save Kids Campaign which tracks childhood deaths. What family fun!

## **If You Can See No Disadvantages, Look Harder.**

If you wonder where your teen-age child (or your spouse) might be in the family auto, you can find out with a gadget for your vehicle called Networkcar. Using a global positioning system (GPS) and a wireless network, the company can install a monitoring device, and establish a personalized website. Log on, and you can see where your car is, and even whether it is parked or in motion. Retail price is suggested at \$995, including service for the first year. Egad! Is there no privacy? Next, junior will have to worry about a telephone-video-camera in the back seat! And that technology is available already.

## **It Is Time For A Complete List Of Whatever Is Pending.**

A man was sentenced to incarceration in the sex offender facility in Farmington, Missouri. He cut through the retaining fence and escaped. The local sheriff was "flabbergasted" when he found that no additional crime had been committed. Missouri law states that escape from a prison or mental health facility is a violation, but does not provide for penalty for escape from the sex offender facility. After two years, the criminal was apprehended, and admitted that he had investigated the law and knew that to escape from there was not a crime. "These people (lawmakers) are stupid." He is being charged with property damage. No statement was forthcoming about fulfilling his sentence; perhaps it should be done by the politician who wrote the law.

## **Stupidity Is An Elemental Force Which No Earthquake Can Match.**

Parents of school children in Spokane, Washington, are resting comfortably knowing that the "zero tolerance" plan is working. Three third grade boys (ages 8 and 9) brought their G-I Joe two inch long plastic rifles to school, and used them in a "threatening manner" while at play. They received one day suspensions for the violation.

## **ADDENDA**

- ❖ The human eyeball weighs about one ounce.
- ❖ A computer programmer is someone who solves a problem you didn't know you had in a way you do not understand.
- ❖ As Mrs. Bill Gates noted after the honeymoon, "So that's why you named it microsoft."

**Aloha and keep the faith — rts■**