

Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

By Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.

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"Patient Confusion and Medical Conflicts Grow"

For years, I have written of how patients are bombarded with confusing medical articles and that we have arrived at a point where common sense has collided with so-called medical science. As a patient advocate, I carefully follow the medical literature addressing the harmful potential of pharmaceutical drugs and supplements. There are so many drug related complications coming out on a daily basis, that it is difficult to keep up and full disclosure by the drug companies is still a far away goal and manipulation of their drug data, to increase sales, is commonplace. The unacceptable number of deaths (over 106,000 annually) from drug adverse effects must be addressed. We are in an age in which snake oil flows faster than Texas crude. The entire dietary supplement industry is out of control, with over 55,000 being peddled, and our citizens are paying premium prices for ineffective and potentially harmful chemical concoctions tagged as "medical breakthrough" and "magic pills." We are witnessing conflicting and opposing recommendations on breast mammography, cervical PAP smears, desired blood pressure levels, safe levels of cholesterol, blood pressure cut off points for hypertension, safety of saturated and polyunsaturated fats, etc. And a major debate can not decide on what really constitutes a so-called "healthy diet." Still, there are now governmental mandates, directing the "food police" on what you can eat, even though the long-standing food pyramid was recently scrapped and replaced by the new and improved food "pie chart." And don't even go to the area of weight loss. Even Dr. Oz's daily hour-long infomercial can't make consistent recommendations and guidelines, without pushing tons of questionable supplements on uninformed viewers. This only leads to patient confusion and skepticism regarding any and all medical recommendations. Just look at the panic of our population created by false alarms (national emergencies) regarding the yearly flu epidemics, or the ineffectiveness of our vaccination programs. An even larger looming problem is the fact that medical intervention can "sustain" life, even when quality is totally gone, for indefinite or extended costly periods. As government controlled healthcare takes over, so called "death panels" may be as close as the Veterans Administration Hospitals. And, socialized medicine is as close as the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), which will bring a new low of patient care quality to all of our citizenry (President and Congress excluded). Without meaningful tort reform, healthcare costs will continue to spiral out of control and where will all of the "new doctors" come from to take care of an additional thirty million people?

In the America that I love, I continually shake my head at the bleak medical picture presented by the daily news. Folks, brace yourself for the medical "new normal."

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