

Doctor's strike symbolizes change in medical views

Two doctors in Aquidneck Island, a Rhode Island community, are on strike. They refuse to treat pregnant women on Medicaid because the \$350 payment does not cover the cost of the entire delivery. This strike sends out a strong signal to the medical community: profits over care.

The state is considering raising the Medicaid payments from \$350 to \$750. But malpractice insurance rates may double by July, making the new payments obsolete.

The dispute in Rhode Island is not a unique problem. Doctors in other states also have to deal with small Medicaid payments. But Aquidneck Island is a relatively isolated community. Only five obstetricians practice in the area and provide the only source of prenatal care. The nearest hospital or clinic is in Providence, about a hour bus ride from Aquidneck Island.

Low-income women have only one choice for prenatal care. By closing this option, the doctors may receive their demands, but they undermine the purpose of the medical profession. They still are treating existing patients and patients they treated in the past. But new patients have nowhere to turn for care.

Obviously some solution is necessary. The Medicaid program in Rhode Island is sound. It provides for 12 visits before delivery, labor supervision, and three post-delivery checkups. Because the amounts of Medicaid payments are determined by the individual states, these checkups are not always provided in other areas of the country. In some cities low-income mothers have their babies in an emergency room — with no care before, and very little after, the birth.

This incident in Rhode Island is a reflection of the problems existing in the medical profession nationwide. As the technology available to and the skills of doctors increase, so does the profit motive. And it does not only affect pregnant low-income women. The elderly and the poor also feel the loss of medical attention.

The days of the caring Doctor Welby have disappeared, and the medical profession has become glamorized — to the extent that doctors expect a life of luxury by the time they start their practice. This attitude hurts the entire profession.

In a January article, Newsweek explored the "quicker and sicker" syndrome. In order to cut costs, hospitals are treating patients more quickly but sending them home before they have completely recovered. One hospital was able to save \$4.7 million in charges by cutting the average length of stay by only two-tenths of a day. There is no evidence to say this harms the patient. But it continues to send out the message of profits first.

The poor and the elderly are the most vulnerable to hospitals motivated by money. As hospitals become businesses, the idea of caring for people becomes a secondary standard. Medicaid and Medicare do not cover all the costs of a patients stay. But they do cover some.

The doctors in Rhode Island and doctors throughout the nation should re-examine their priorities. The poor need medical attention and it should be provided for them — regardless of their ability to pay.

Medical care is something we take for granted until we need it. The medical profession should not be undermined by basic greed. It is considered a respected profession. But if doctors continue to place money over patients, this view could change quickly.

LATEST ADVICE FOR PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF SEXUAL DISEASES: INSTEAD OF CONDOMS, WEAR LEISURE SUITS.



Letters

Fetuses

We shouldn't lose sight of the most important factor in the abortion controversy. The factor that overshadows any other consideration is whether a baby in the womb is human. If so, that child deserves protection.

First of all, the term "fetus" is a descriptive term just like "infant" or "adolescent." Some people actually will say, "We're talking about a fetus, not a baby. The absurdity of such a statement is quite apparent."

The "fetus" develops brain waves during the first two months after conception. The heart develops earlier than that. Most medical experts consider a person legally dead when brain waves stop. So shouldn't human life be considered as existing after brain waves have first started?

The baby is as genetically different from the mother as you or I are from our mothers — a simple tissue biopsy would reveal that. The baby's blood circulates in an enclosed system, and his or her blood type might be totally different than the mother's.

True, the baby depends on the mother for nourishment the entire nine months, but when born that child will depend on others for survival. Come to think of it, don't we all depend on others throughout our lives? It would be ridiculous to base our "value" or right to live on our independence from others.

To "abort a fetus" actually means to kill a baby when translated. That's what motivates people to seek an end to legalized abortion.

Lori Parkman
Elmira

Being there

The movie "Platoon" and its associated reverberations including comment and critical evaluation have occupied considerable time and verbiage.

From the perspective of a former infantryman/sniper in Vietnam during most of 1969 and part of 1970, it appears that the most common reactions to it are either disbelieving or sensationalistic. To those who would disbelieve, it happened. To those who would sensationalize, in terms of its absolute horror, it was sensational enough for even the most jaded of those who watch horror films.

To those who would criticize its textual content, those conversations were the start of a process of catharsis, which was interrupted by the understandable wish of the American public to forget there was ever the "travesty" of Vietnam.

We who were there wish we could forget too, but that has not been possible in the 17 years since I was evacuated, for me as an individual.

The mechanics of fighting a guerrilla war are such that all non-Americans must be considered as the potential end to one's life, and thus must be stopped in any way possible if survival is to be insured.

Personally, in terms of the events depicted in the film, I have seen much worse and done

much worse, though I have spoken little. My actions and those of others were non-normal reactions to non-normal situations, of which war is made up. Disbelievers, welcome to the real world.

Dan Flemmer
Anthropology GTF

Bad analogy

Dan Goulet's surreal analogies (ODE, Feb. 11) do not even merit response. With hindsight, it is rather obvious that the Weather Underground was using rather foolish means to attain a worthy end.

"Murderous?" I am not aware of a shred of evidence that reflects their intention to murder anyone.

"Terrorists?" I doubt if anyone ever lost ten minutes of sleep worrying about being blown up by their organization. This may be a "great nation," but training people to go halfway around the world to terrorize a tiny country — as the ROTC was doing — was a perversion we ought not to forget.

Go see "Platoon," and you'll see what the Weather people, however unrealistically, were trying to stop.

As for Bissell, why send a person, who for years has been serving other people, to prison because he (allegedly) attempted to damage some property 17 years ago?

Brian Anglin
Ex-combat medic
Vietnam

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