

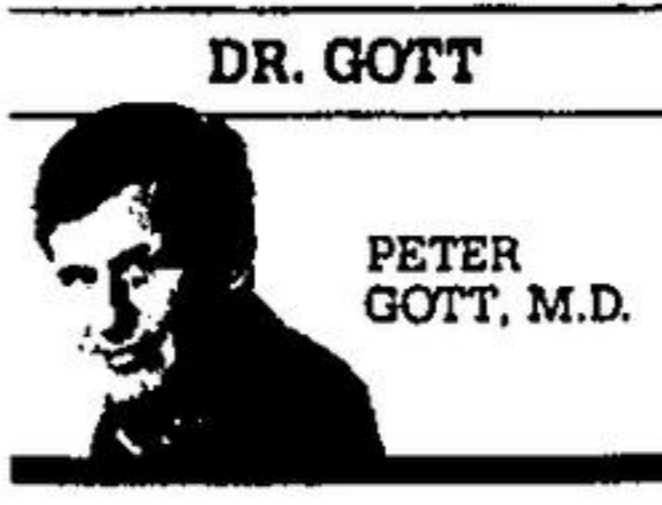
Doctors prove they're all too human

By Peter H. Gott, M.D.

I had a lousy week. Three events occurred that reminded me of my frailties — meaning that I am human. This realization dogs me while I go about my duties like any other ordinary adult, making decisions and generally acting responsibly. In my profession, making decisions means making mistakes. This is difficult for me to accept. Also, I get tired and, worst of all, I become exasperated. These characteristics are not

part of the M.D. persona. The errors come with the territory; all doctors are fearful of errors because so much rides on our judgment. We choose to regard ourselves as slightly superhuman; so, we are tough on ourselves. Not as tough as the public is on us, mind you, but pretty tough nonetheless. Therefore, when we make a miscalculation, we're afraid not only of public humiliation but of the small, insistent voices of insecurity within us.

It started off with a young man who had a bellyache. He did not complain of fever or other symptoms and I couldn't define the cause of his problem. A blood count and abdominal X-rays were inconclusive. When he became sicker 24 hours later and required emergency surgery for a ruptured appendix, I felt I had let him down. I had been trained to identify such a common condition in its early stages and had successfully done so on dozens of occasions. On an intellectual level, I appreciated that my pa-



DR. GOTT

PETER GOTT, M.D.

tient's appendicitis presented in an unusual form; on an emotional level, however, I experienced the pangs of self-doubt.

These pangs were not helped when, two days later, I admitted a middle-aged woman to the hospital with what I thought was intestinal obstruction. The surgeon disagreed, held my hand and suggested a barium enema examination to find the source of her discomfort. The X-rays showed diverticulitis, inflammation of sacular outpouchings of the large bowel, a condition that could have been diagnosed without hospitalization. Once again, I had cause to question whether my stars were in proper alignment —

even though, in the back of my mind, I remembered that I had efficiently diagnosed more difficult and serious ailments many times during my 22 years of active practice. However, the mind plays strange tricks; I wondered if I were having the screaming moan or whether I was suffering from accelerated senility. I kicked myself squarely in the behind. The stage was set for exasperation. When a new patient walked into the office, he obsequiously whined and complained as he listed a litany of complaints that could best be described as trivial. He seemed to be at the tail-end of a minor upper respiratory infection. His examination was normal, as were a series of blood tests. When I telephoned him to give him the news that his basic good health would probably return in a few days, he sounded disappointed. "You don't like me, do you?" he asked.

"Listen," I chided, "it's not my job to like you or dislike you. I'm supposed to find out what's the matter with you and treat it. OK?" As I replaced the receiver, I recognized that I'd blown my cool. And, in fact, the patient was right: I didn't like him. However, this is not how a caring and competent physician is supposed to behave.

The next day, I apologized into his answering machine, but it was too late. Put off by my temporary lapse of good manners, he will undoubtedly find health care elsewhere. I didn't feel comfortable about my behavior and I resolved to change my attitude. For the next few weeks or months, I'll be accepting and agreeable. My fuse will be lengthened. But, at some unpredictable time in the future, I'll be vulnerable again. My faults will show up once more. I try to control them but there they are, just as obvious to the trained observer as my age spots and gray hair. I sometimes wish I weren't so damned human. I'd like to be as unflappable as those kindly, well-disciplined doctors in TV series.

No such luck. While I am busy struggling with my imperfections, I hope that my patients will understand that I share their insecurities and self-doubts. Most people try to do the best they can but sometimes they stub their toes. Me, too.

Coffee adds full flavor to recipes

POLLY'S POINTERS



POLLY FISHER

DEAR POLLY — Often a dessert recipe with coffee flavoring will call for instant coffee powder. Can freeze-dried crystals be used in such recipes?

DEAR KAREN — Freeze-dried coffee crystals should be fine, but they should be crushed unless the coffee is dissolved in liquid before blending with the dry ingredients. However, if a recipe calls for instant espresso powder, do try to use espresso instead of ordinary instant or freeze-dried coffee. The espresso powder has a richer flavor and darker color that may be important to attaining the full flavor of some recipes. — POLLY

RECIPE OF THE WEEK: Holiday

ASTRO-GRAPH



BERNICE BEDE OSOL

In the year ahead you are likely to be shooting for several major objectives. Although each might not be attained, your most important goals will have good chances of being achieved. CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) Today you might secretly resent having to do something for someone because you'll feel you're being imposed upon unfairly, yet you'll still comply without making a big deal about it. Capricorn, treat yourself to a birthday gift. Send for your Astro-Graph predictions for the year ahead by mailing \$1 to Astro-Graph, c/o this newspaper, P.O. Box 91428, Cleveland, OH 44101-3428. Be sure to state your zodiac sign. AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 19) Be wary about getting involved in any form of romantic intrigue at this time, because what you'll hope to keep secret will not go undetected. PISCES (Feb. 20-March 20) Be fair, but also be realistic if you have to negotiate a delicate agreement today. Don't be wishy-washy and say "yes" to terms you don't like just to be nice. ARIES (March 21-April 19) Avoid tack-

parties get a spirited lift with this zesty rum-flavored cheese spread.

Blend together thoroughly 2 cups shredded Cheddar cheese, 1 cup crumbled blue cheese, 1/2 pound softened butter, 1/2 cup light rum and 1/4 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce. Pack into a crock or bowl. Cover. Chill several hours. Serve with crackers or vegetable dippers. Makes 2 cups.

My newsletter "Cooking with Wines, Liqueurs and Spirits," offers other festive recipes flavored with your favorite fine wines and liqueurs. Send \$1 for each copy to POLLY'S POINTERS, in care of this newspaper, P.O. Box 93883, Cleveland, OH 44101-5383. Be sure to include the title. — POLLY

DEAR POLLY — To keep blouses and dresses from blowing off the clothesline, I put up dog chain for my line, then just hang the coat hangers in the links on the chain. Nothing falls to the ground. — VERA

DEAR POLLY — Doctors usually require their patients to bring their medicine bottles on each visit so that they can verify the medicines being used.

ling minor chores today if your heart is not in them. You'll be much more effective doing the same tasks later when your mood changes.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) Don't let possessiveness gain the upper hand today if someone you're very fond of appears to be paying more attention to someone other than you.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) Continue to be kind to others today, especially family members, even if they do not show proper appreciation for your gestures. Their minds could be on other things.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) Be extremely careful today that you do not treat others in a condescending fashion. If you are insincere or try to use flattery to gain your ends, it won't work.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) If you have a Christmas gift to return today, don't exchange it for something impractical just because the packaging dazzled you. Look for substance, not flash.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) Try not to butt into situations today that do not directly concern you. Although your intentions will be good, they could be misunderstood and rejected.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) Someone you like who has hurt your feelings recently could be completely unaware of your reaction. Bring it out into the open today, because it can be easily resolved.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 22) Be selective regarding the types of outside activities you get involved with at this time. There's a possibility you might jump into something which is over your purse.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23-Dec. 21) If you are not willing to share the limelight today with a person who made a recent accomplishment possible, you might not get help the next time it is needed.

My friend Juliette suggested that it is more convenient to make a list of all medicines, including the prescription numbers, and keep it in one's purse rather than take the bottles each time or maybe forget them. — MARION

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ACROSS

- 1 Sound from a kennel
- 4 Designer Calvin
- 9 Sweet potato
- 12 Exclamation of disgust
- 13 Musical movement
- 14 Psychic
- 15 Guller
- 16 Glumness
- 17 Floor covering
- 18 Puts up money
- 19 Sends out
- 21 Not boastful
- 23 Greek letter
- 24 Silliness
- 28 Government agent
- 32 Yorkshire river
- 33 Bewildered
- 34 Trivet piece
- 35 Designate
- 37 Buy and
- 39 Short sleep
- 40 Household appliance
- 41 Animosity
- 43 Theodore, for short
- 45 Wooden tub
- 46 light
- 49 Innocent
- 53 Very warm
- 54 24 hours ago
- 58 Tennis pro
- 59 Squeeze
- 60 Be situated
- 61 de plume
- 62 Forest items
- 63 Printer's measures

DOWN

- 1 Arizona city
- 2 Dramatic conflict
- 3 Unit of illumination
- 4 Hare sect
- 5 Chaney
- 6 Chemical suffix
- 7 Identifications (sl.)
- 8 Organs of smell
- 9 Cosmonaut
- 10 Gagari
- 10 In (routinized)
- 11 Russian planes
- 16 Bandleader Ar-naz
- 20 Baseball glove
- 22 Affirmed
- 23 Old Testament book
- 24 Pueblo Indian
- 25 Resin-producing tree
- 26 Verne hero
- 29 Opp. of maxi
- 30 Wings
- 31 Knots in cotton fiber
- 36 Grafted, in heraldry
- 38 African feline
- 42 Shred
- 44 Sphinx land
- 46 Oriental chief
- 47 Western weed
- 48 Article
- 50 Unemployed
- 51 Futile
- 52 Organs of sight
- 55 Be wrong
- 56 Diocese
- 57 Mao tung

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36	Grafted, in heraldry	50	Unemployed
38	African feline	51	Futile
42	Shred	52	Organs of sight
44	Sphinx land	55	Be wrong
46	Oriental chief	56	Diocese
47	Western weed	57	Mao tung
48	Article		

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CELEBRITY CIPHER
Celebrity Cipher cryptograms are created from quotations by famous people, past and present. Each letter in the cipher stands for another. Today's clue: A equals H.

• LPQODPI KJ HX ZKVL.
DHLSKUD HX HKJNSLJJ. KN KJ
GLSX QCCI JCHLNKHLJ NC
QLN DZDX VSCB CPLJ ZKVL.
— ULISKU ADSIZKUYL.

SOLUTION: "England is my wife. America my mistress. It is very good sometimes to get away from one's wife." — Cedric Hardwicke.