

Opinion

Good affordable health care depends on us

We may be turning into a nation of pill-poppers and it might be killing us, both financially and literally.

Senior citizens, it is sad to say, are among the most vulnerable people in our society. Many are trusting souls, and have grown up in an era when "Do as you are told" was the rule of the day.

When it comes to medical care, seniors often do as they are told, and in many cases, they are being told to take an increasing succession of pills and medicines for what ails them.

Some overworked physicians, or physicians intent on racking up high fees, are quick to prescribe a pill for a senior rather than go through a time-consuming battery of tests or spend time listening in order to better understand the seniors' needs. The



Viewpoint

Andrew Mair

physician is often quick to assume the aches and pains of many seniors are simply the by-products of getting old, and not pathological at all.

A survey released this week indicated that the doctors making the most money in one east coast province were also the same doctors who prescribed the most pills and saw the most elderly patients. In other words, the office was like a revolving

door to a pill factory. In many cases, the seniors were not getting the care they should have been receiving, and in others, there is good evidence to suggest the treatment received was killing, not healing them.

We all have a responsibility to maintain a good level of health care. Both doctor and patient have to take the time to ensure the medical treatment we receive is both appropriate and necessary.

This week, we were told of a woman who spent three weeks in a hospital with migraines which prevented her from keeping food down. She was given pill after pill. Only after she asked for one was she granted a brain scan. She was found to have an aneurism in the brain stem.

This makes the point that all

patients receiving care must remember: Ask questions.

In the hustle and bustle of everyday health care, patients can easily get lost. Especially senior citizens, who are all too often trusting of a person in authority such as a doctor.

Patients of any age should always ask questions of any procedure or medication, demand the best care and insist on an explanation of the diagnosis and treatment schedule.

Research your diagnosis and treatment, and if you are not satisfied; if you think you are being pushed a pill as a quick remedy, get a second opinion and don't exclude non medical approaches.

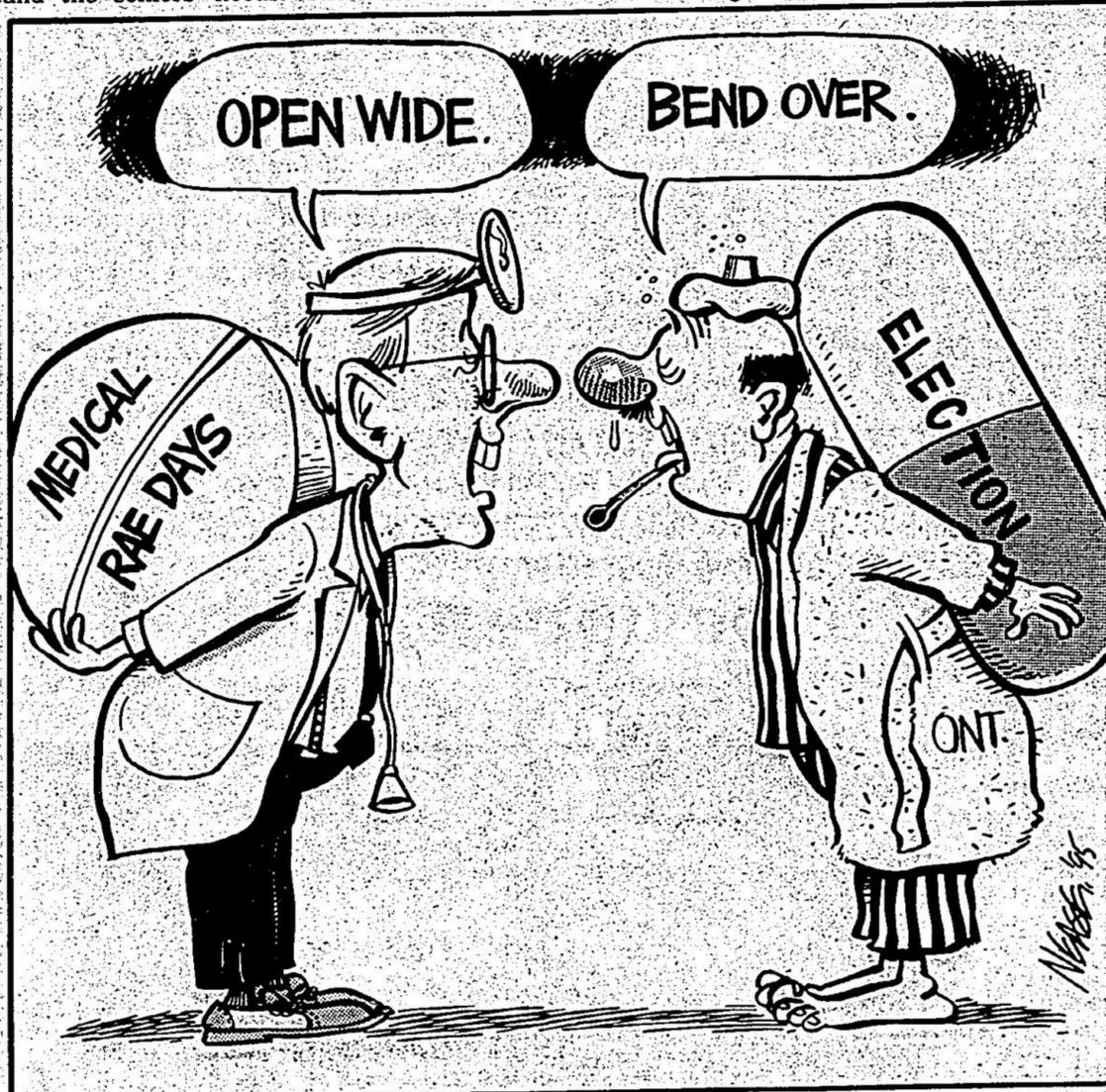
We can have an affordable, excellent health care system. We all just have to work together to get it.

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Invited to a war? Don't pay

The Army spent \$2 billion for fly swatters to send to Alaska. When the fly swatters got up there they found there wasn't no flies in Alaska. So the Army spent \$4 billion more to raise flies to ship to Alaska so's they could use them fly swatters! That's how the Army works, son!

Senator Claghorn
And that's a joke, son - but only just. You may recall that a couple of years ago, reporters discovered the Pentagon had paid a vendor \$600 apiece for airline toilet seat covers (Street price: \$25). The jarhead geniuses had also laid out \$7,662 for a coffee maker, \$400 for a hammer and \$659.53 for an ashtray.

Not that the military mind operates any more brilliantly north of the border. Back in 1987, then-Canadian Defence Minister Jean-Jacques Blais announced that the Canadian Armed Forces would be issued with M-16 rifles at a cost of \$1,314 each. Now, at the time, an average street psychopath could walk into any Guns 'R' Us store in the U.S. and pick up the same heater for less than \$700. Reason for the uh, discrepancy?

"Royalties" said the defence minister. How about bone-head stupidity, Mister Blais?

But then that, too, is a Canadian military tradition. It was just one year later that Perrin Beatty, in his incarnation as Canadian defence minister, was pushing a plan to spend \$8 billion on a fleet of nuclear submarines to keep Canada's Arctic free from the Commie Menace. Fortunately the Evil Empire vaporized itself before Ottawa had to figure out a way to winkle an extra \$8 billion out of the back pockets of Canadian taxpayers.

Makes you wonder, though. If our military leaders can't mobilize the brainpower required to run a corner candy store, how are they going to win a war?

Maybe it's the old Too Many Chiefs, Not Enough Indians syndrome. Last winter the news leaked out that 19 Canadian generals flew to Florida for "business" and socializing with American brass.

Nineteen generals? For a country with an army smaller than Portugal's? Was there anybody left holding the fort back home?



Basic Black

Arthur Black

Oh, yes. Canada could well afford to dispatch a dozen and a half Brass Hats to frolic in the Florida surf. After all, there were still more than 50 of them tripping over their swagger sticks here at home. Read it and weep, Canucks - the Canadian Armed Forces stagger along under the weight of 93 generals and admirals - not to mention 295 colonels and navy captains.

This is a country in which the total airforce consists of just 300 planes.

Where the navy runs fewer submarines than the West Edmonton Mall.

A little top-heavy, officer-wise, eh wot?

Our current Defence Minister, David Collenette, has promised to "trim" the ranks. He says that over the next three years, the number of generals and admirals will be reduced from 93 to 70. Fifty colonels and navy captains will be demobbed reducing the total from 295 to 245.

Which is a start...but when you hear that Bell Canada plans to axe 10,000 jobs and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation intends to deep-six more than 30 per cent of its employees...it's tough to shed a tear for the generals and the admirals.

Somebody once described the Pentagon as a log drifting down the river with 25,000 ants on it, each one convinced he was in charge.

Sounds like a fair description of the Canadian Armed Forces - with figures suitably adjusted for deflation, of course.

The poet Carl Sandburg once wrote "Sometime they'll give a war, and nobody will come."

Maybe we can short-circuit that. Maybe the next time somebody gives a war, we can simply refuse to pay.

ADAM

by Brian Basset

