



Dropping Your Pants for Full Coverage

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FROM THE EDITOR



Dropping Your Pants for Full Coverage

by Lee E. Mortenson, D.P.A.

So, it was the middle of the afternoon and another busy day with tons of patients seen and more waiting.

Then, the next patient, Harold, brings a matronly woman into the examination room with him.

"I need to ask you," says the busy oncologist to his patient, "to remove your clothes for this examination."

Harold nods. The matron stays.

A little later as our friendly neighborhood oncologist passes through the chemo room, he sees the matron again. This time she is standing next to Harold's chemo chair. She has a pad in her hand. Reading labels on the bags, she makes notes.

Feeling uncomfortable, our oncologist suspects something is a little odd.

"Hey," he says to his nurse, "see if you can get Harold alone for a minute and ask him who that woman is."

The answer prompts the oncologist to act quickly. He approaches the matron and throws her out of the office.

No, she was not the patient's wife, mother, or concerned relative. She was, instead, Harold's case manager.

Holding his head in his hands (I guarantee he was holding his head in his hands), our oncologist sits glumly in his office and mutters, "Why did you bring her?"

"Well," says the patient, "my

wife and I didn't think we had any choice when she insisted on coming. After all, she is the one who says whether or not I can get any treatment."

Who are these case managers? Have they a brain in their heads? Why were they let out on their own? Who are their supervisors?

The scenario is a great marker of the level of passivity resident in a large part of the U.S. public. How many times have you heard one of our comrades proclaim, "When it gets bad enough, the American public is going to rise up in protest! When they find out what it is going to be like..."

Don't believe it.

For every firebrand patient advocate, there are ten million Americans who are already dropping their pants to make certain they are covered. They know that Uncle Sam has already snapped his suspenders. Hillary and Bill Clinton are not going to provide a safety net. Newt is more interested in poking holes in what's out there already.

In the spirit of free enterprise most employers are trying to drive down their costs. This means most employers have already figured out what the insurers have figured out: People in need of care will do whatever they need to do to survive.

Without any information to the contrary, patients will believe that whatever health plan their employer offers is standard care.

I guess the protest is up to us. ■