



THE MCDOUGALL NEWSLETTER | *It's the food.*



The Following Are Responses from Readers about the October 2011 Newsletter [Article](#), *How to Protect Yourself from Abusive Medical Doctors*

I asked readers to share their stories about doctors who have misrepresented their goods and services and have included almost all of their stories with edits. The names have been deleted. The high proportion of doctors, nurses and dietitians who responded surprised me. Maybe because they are familiar with medicine, and they have long ago discovered the true human nature of the people in these businesses.

I also have had numerous encounters like your patient and it is infuriating. That is why I think there should be a new medical specialty: Patient Advocacy. Patients need physician advocates to protect them from predatory, self interested, and ignorant practitioners. Medical errors in one form or another are responsible for more deaths than any other single cause including cancer. Morbidity stats are even worse. What is most interesting to me is how we became so irrational. IG, M.D. FACS ABHIM

As an anesthesiologist I get many opportunities to see the reaction of surgeons as the data showing no benefit for various procedures becomes public, e.g. PSAs, mammograms, etc. There is uniform outrage, and disbelief! Those who respond in such a way are not concerned about science, the concern is about having spent your whole career doing more harm than good!! Certainly an unpalatable thought, and quickly rejected. It's not necessarily about money, but if all physicians were salaried, there would definitely be more evidence based medicine as a standard of care.

I'm particularly interested in the "drunken sailor" speech of Dr. Hopeful, and the lack of the most basic respect and consideration for your professional counsel. Does diet have anything to do with that?? My answer is, "Yes!"

Our dietary choices profoundly affect the way we think, feel, and act. What we put in our body is a moral choice. Everyone knows that two bottles of wine make for a rough couple of days, or that the 24 oz steak will make you feel bloated and sluggish for hours. It follows then that each person who values his body and who is careful in their dietary choices has a moral sensitivity that exceeds that of the those who discard or who choose to reject the evidence regarding diet and health.

Does Dr. Hopeful have a complete grasp of the role of dietary and lifestyle intervention? If so, she is unlike any specialist in our hospital!! Her emails don't support such a suggestion. So are we allowed to judgmentally suggest that she has a LOWER moral sensitivity than she should need for her professional challenges? To me, her aggressive, expletive-filled tirade is consistent with such a conclusion.

Bottom line? Vegetarians care more about themselves and their neighbor as a result of simply choosing something better for their lives. Diet is a moral decision, affecting our moral character. SM, M.D.

Twenty-five years in family practice and fifteen years being aware of the true cause of disease and the hope for healing. I find myself tip toeing lightly in my family practice, within my family, even within my church on these topics. I routinely talk with patients, family members, and church folks who respond with utter disbelief when a pathway of relief from their suffering is mentioned. By their reaction, it frequently seems that I am telling them something bad; that I am mocking them, that I am giving them false hope.

Then there is the reaction of my colleagues. Here I must tread very lightly as "standard of care" and "evidence based medicine" has boxed their minds into a system of belief that makes the truth, not just seem foolish, but dangerous. My work as a hospitalist gives me some room for their respect, but not much.

If the old adage is true that truth is ignored, violently opposed and then considered self-evident; I dream for the day when the violence will be done. Feeling very alone ... often. I just wanted to thank you for helping me to feel less alone through your experience. NG, D.O.

I had a similar experience with gynecologists. But my story ended happily. In 1990 during a routine pelvic exam my gynecologist discovered a mass near my cervix. After performing a laparoscopy, a biopsy confirmed his diagnosis of external, pedunculated fibroid tumors. His course of treatment was a hysterectomy. I was 38 at the time and my husband and I were trying to conceive, so the idea of a hysterectomy made those plans impossible. I got a second and third opinion, all male doctors, all recommending the surgery. One doctor chided me for waiting so long to try to have children and even said my chances of conception at my age were slim. Another said the hysterectomy was necessary because removing fibroids could cause me to bleed to death during surgery. He said a complete removal of my uterus would save my life.

A friend gave me the name of a female OB/GYN. During my initial consultation she told me that the surgery to remove fibroids was called a myomectomy. She told me that she had performed this procedure many times and never had to revert to a hysterectomy. However, she made me sign a form that gave her permission during surgery to remove my uterus if she was unable to stop the bleeding, all the while assuring me that with external fibroids it was unlikely that I would have that problem. The 1992 myomectomy was successful--she removed 13 fibroids. In 1994 the same doctor delivered my beautiful baby girl. I am still a patient of this doctor, all these years later, and she has always given me good medical counsel.

My only advice is to keep shopping for the doctor whose ideas mesh with yours. Even if my doctor had to do a hysterectomy during my surgery, at least she told me she had been successful before, that she would try, and if that failed why the removal of my uterus would be necessary. She fought for me. That's when you know you have a good doctor. CF

Your advocacy for patient rights was a major reason I attended your 10-day session in August 2008. I had a nightmarish experience with the medical establishment in April 2005. I had an anxiety attack over a family matter. With discomfort in my chest, I went to the emergency room at a local hospital in suburban Kansas City. An EKG revealed atrial fibrillation. An echocardiogram was inconclusive. The cardiologist wanted to do a more invasive test, an angiography, to investigate possible blockages. I could see the dominoes starting to fall: angiography, then angioplasty or bypass surgery. I suspected that once the angiography was performed, there would be no pause for second opinions; the angioplasty or bypass would be done while I was still on the table.

I told the cardiologist that I wanted a second opinion prior to any testing more invasive than the echocardiogram. He told me that I should think of my body in the same way that I thought of my car, I should leave the "car" with the "mechanic" (cardiologist), and pick it up when it was all fixed up. I insisted on the second opinion. He and my personal physician refused to facilitate my consultation with any medical experts outside the hospital.

I told them I would leave the hospital if necessary to get the second opinion. They replied with a threat: If I left against doctor's orders I would probably end of being held responsible for the entire hospital bill. Since my life was in the balance, I chose to leave the hospital in search of a second opinion. Medical personal refused to give me advice as to how I might transition to home safely. I later discovered that just advising me to take aspirin to thin my blood would have helped.

The day after leaving the hospital, I went to my personal physician's office where I was informed by the receptionist that the physician would no longer treat me as a patient. When I asked for a copy of my medical records, I was told that they could only accommodate my request for a rather large fee unless I could furnish the name of another physician for transmission. I didn't have a backup physician. I started walking. Up the road I entered a professional building where a family practice was located. As luck would have it, a physician there was willing to take me on as a patient.

I wrote a letter to my insurance company detailing my experience. I emphasized that the hospital had failed to allow me to have a second opinion. I was never charged a cent by the hospital, the doctors, or the lab. I later underwent a nuclear exercise stress test. The results showed that I had no heart function abnormalities. MLR

My internist likes to insist on an annual exam and I resist that because I am too busy and also don't want a bunch of tests for no reason. He has tried two years in a row to get me to do a bone scan (I am 52 years old) but I tell him I already know what I should do for bone health (diet and exercise), and besides, I warn him, no matter what the results would be he would not get me to take any pills. He insists on a chest X-ray and his equipment seems old and rattles and I'd rather avoid that, so he gave me a long talking

to about a young patient in whom it was discovered he had an enlarged heart. Dr. McDougall, if I have an enlarged heart, I really don't want to know anyway - as long as it does not hurt or anything. If I drop dead, whatever. You can see I go overboard here on avoiding doctors. Luckily, he leaves the mammogram fight to my gynecologist but guess what, I stopped going to her YEARS ago for PAP tests because I was SICK AND TIRED of fighting about how hell will freeze over before I get a mammogram. Have not had a pap test in years and years. And I take no drugs for menopause symptoms, never have. I had to change my life for that - exercise more, stop skipping meals, get more sleep, drink less alcohol and coffee. And dress in layers.

Otherwise, I will stay home and die there as I have a terror of doctors and hospitals. Don't trust them by & large, and while I love my Internist, I am terrified that his sweet demeanor will someday lead me into drugs and surgery if I am not very, very careful. DB

I just read your October newsletter and your article on Marsha really touched me. I'm 39 years old. Several months ago I noticed a hard lump in my breast; I went to my general care physician, who gave me a referral to my local hospital's breast center. At the breast center they did a mammogram; despite it not showing the hallmark bright white spot, they requested further investigation with a biopsy. I returned as requested for the biopsy, and the doctor who took the sample, rather than giving me results, referred me to a breast surgeon for a second opinion. I met with the surgeon at a later date and she recommended surgery for the lump on the basis of not knowing what it was. I refused the surgery, saying "I'd take my chances with MY lump."

At this point, about two months had gone by since I initially noticed the lump. Several weeks later I saw my general care physician and he said the results of the biopsy were clear and that there was nothing wrong, it was just an area of very dense breast tissue. Anyway, this experience made me feel very apprehensive about the professional advice of specialists and even experts, which refer patients to them. I was tremendously disappointed with their lack of professionalism. S

In your last newsletter you asked for stories about doctors who misrepresent their goods and services. I believe I have experienced a pretty obvious misrepresentation of the value of a procedure to open an artery in my heart and place a stent in the artery, which was supposedly partially closed. It has been five years now since I dodged the procedure which obviously at the time I did not need and the only thing that initially saved me from the Cardiologist performing the procedure was that my insurance would not pay for an elective procedure like this at the hospital that I was in. Looking back on what happened it sure seems as if the Cardiologist was looking at my case as a way to make some easy money and never bothered to share with me any possible alternatives.

I have convinced my PCP to quit suggesting that ever so often I need to visit a Cardiologist. My PCP has finally become a believer that I am able to manage my heart health without involving a Cardiologist. Since mid 2007 I have not taken any meds and my periodic check ups with my PCP have shown that my plant based diet and exercise program is working. My blood pressure remains around 110/60 mmHg and my resting heart rate is around 58. I am just under 6 foot, 1 inches, and my weight stays around 178 pounds. The test I had done with my PCP about a month ago showed my total cholesterol was 88, my LDL was 45, my triglycerides were 76 and my CRP was .12. I run 3 miles every other day and bike for 30 minutes in the days in between. I have participated in six 5K runs between 2009 & 2011 and have finished first in my age division in each of these runs. My age is 63. I owe all of this to the fact that when I was desperately searching for answers back in 2006 that I just happened to stumble on the McDougall website. KC

A year ago I went to emergency, having coughed up blood. Eight and a half hours later I was told that I might have a tumor in my lung, and sent on my way. I attempted to get some information from the doctor but he didn't want to answer many questions. When I kept inquiring, he said that he's not very good at reading CT scans, so I asked if there was someone who was. I was in shock!

Two and a half weeks after emergency I saw a pulmonologist. After logically putting the pieces together (which did not happen in emergency), he reached the same conclusion that I'd reached. Not only did I not have lung cancer, I did not need the CT angiogram I'd had in emergency nor the recommended bronchoscopy (which I repeatedly declined). However, due to the unmerited CTA there was an incidental finding of enlarged lung lymph nodes, so he talked about lymphoma and sarcoidosis and recommended a follow up CT, which could lead to a lymph node biopsy (uh, no thanks).

I did more research. I ended up declining invasive tests and more radiation and contrast from a CT. I'm glad I did not immediately follow the recommendations, even though I was very frightened and tempted to do so, and instead spent time researching.

I did file several complaints with Kaiser and to Kaiser's credit both the chief of emergency medicine and the specialist I was working with called me and had long conversations, "answering" my questions. In the end, however, questions are never truly an-

swered. There's so much bluff and blurring, with a ton of fear mixed in, that I decided to quit caring about getting to the bottom of whatever it is that still persists. It's so scary and so stress-inducing talking to doctors.

I know exactly what Marsha means when she says that going up against everyone's advice is more stressful than having the condition (never mind that friends and family are more influenced by medical marketing and fear-mongering than by objective, factual information, which means they are not in a position to either agree or disagree with doctors' recommendations). The pressure to test/treat, test/treat, test/treat is brutal, aggressive and extreme. It's very difficult to resist. It's hard to think straight when you're scared stiff.

Thank you for providing a key question, that medical care consumers need to ask: will this treatment cause me to live longer and/or better?. I'm going to save it, and pass it on to others. BG

I am a dietitian and believe in nutrition and lifestyle before drugs and invasive treatments. I decided to go to a naturopathic doctor for help because I believed he or she would give me a more balanced opinion and maybe point something out that I was missing in the area of diet or lifestyle.

I went to the holistic doctor with two main objectives in mind. To get a basic lab panel ordered to screen for any possible abnormal lab values. The other was to get an order for massage therapy to help me relax and release tension in my body.

After giving her a description of my vegan diet, I was proud of my diet recall and was expecting a supportive response from her. Instead she made the suggestion that I stop flaxseed oil and take cod liver oil and asked if I felt I was getting enough protein! She also suggested I stop drinking soymilk. She stated she would recommend whole milk cream over soymilk and that only about 4 patients that she knows of are able to digest soymilk. She suggested a small list of supplements that I could purchase from the clinic.

From this visit I was amazed at the lack of understanding of nutrition by a naturopathic doctor. I was sad to think that many people without the knowledge and firm stand that I have about diet might be convinced to eat a less healthy diet and possibly take a handful of expensive supplements. It seems doctors tend to teach popular medicine instead of what is most helpful to disease prevention and well-being. AS, RD

I am a social dancer. One particularly long dance (4 hours) resulted in uncharacteristic knee pain which motivated me to seek advice from a "Sports Medicine" clinic. The specialist evaluated my knee joint x-rays by saying that they were both "shot" and needed to be replaced. I sent the x-rays to another doctor and sought his advice through a telephone consultation. When I asked him if he agreed with the need to replace both of my knee joints he said, "NO! There is something else going on there. Go see a podiatrist." He found, one of your legs is longer than the other. He fitted me with orthopedic inserts which I have been dancing and walking on now for several years without any knee pain whatsoever. SA

I want to share my experience with an abusive doctor: I'm 58 years old, and have battled fibromyalgia for many years. After going from dr. to dr. in the beginning years, only to have medications offered. I found that a vegan diet and exercise have helped most.

Three years ago, my car was rear-ended; which caused a major flare and back pain. My mother-in-law recommended that I see her chiropractor. I did and he said that he could help me with the accident-caused pain, and if I signed up for the \$2500.00 wellness plan, I'd be even better. It would include months of adjustments, and evaluations by his wife the nutritionist. Always looking to feel better, I agreed, but after a few weeks, I was dizzy and not as "well" as I hoped I'd be. The nutrition was to include a "cleanse" and supplements formulated by his wife, who "studied in Europe".

I called and told his office that I'd like to cancel the rest of my plan and asked for a refund for the remainder of what I had originally paid up front. The dr. called me that night and said "No one loves you enough to tell you that you enjoy having fibromyalgia. You ARE fibromyalgia." I asked him if he actually had any patients who had fibromyalgia, and he said that he did not at the time. Long story, short, I did get a refund, but it took months. AB

Four years ago, after a lumpectomy for stage 2 breast cancer, I was told to have chemotherapy. The oncologist is associated with

UCLA and is the author of a book on the breast disease.

I went to a different oncologist, test in hand, to see if I was crazy to forego chemo. Oncologist #2 uses the Oncotype test regularly in his practice and agreed completely that it was rational for me not to risk the side effects of chemo to go from a 7% to a 5% chance of distant recurrence.

I sent Oncologist a letter stating his error on points of fact. I told him he had every right to tell me that it was his opinion that I should get chemo, but not to misstate fact. I told him I would no longer be seeing him. He never responded.

Who know whether or not whether my cancer will recur, but I know I made the right decision with respect to chemotherapy. I also now know that "experts" can be wrong. Thank you for your work in this area. FL

As an RN patient advocate in the business of sorting out fact from fiction on the behalf of my patients. I expect the physicians caring for my clients to be honest. If integrity is not the foundation of our promotion of health in our community we are all in peril. It is enough that the politicians and food industry have sold out. Please continue to provide this kind of thoughtful information. RS, RN, BSN, iRNPA

The lead article in your newsletter is a masterpiece. Thank you for being a calm, utterly reasonable, civil, punctiliously scientific gentleman and scholar among the dismaying number of arrogant doctors out there of less scrupulous means. I am simply in awe this morning to learn of the incomplete and slanted recommendations women routinely receive from their gynecologists. PR

In 1984, I was diagnosed with ulcerative colitis after having a colonoscopy. I had been very ill with abdominal cramps and diarrhea for about six months. I was in the hospital for eight days and on an IV for seven of those days. I did not have surgery. I was put on Prednisone for two months and Azulfidine. My doctor told me that I would be on medication for the rest of my life. I was also told that I would need liver panels periodically as Azulfidine was very toxic. I asked about diet and was told I could eat anything I wanted and that diet had nothing to do with ulcerative colitis.

I gradually cut back on the Azulfidine and did not tell my doctor. When I went for my yearly examine, he scheduled me for another colonoscopy. I protested but he would not listen. I left his office, cancelled the appointment and never went back.

I had been searching bookstores and the library and found the McDougall Program and started following the program most of the time. I found more of your books and videos. I am now following your program about 99%. I have taken no medication since 1985 and I do very well except when I cheat which isn't very often. S

In May 2009 I was diagnosed with breast cancer. As part of the process of determining if it was invasive, I had to have a second biopsy. Prior to the biopsy I did a lot of research about all aspects of breast cancer. One of the pieces of information that I had discovered was the importance of the timing of the biopsy. I had read that a biopsy should be done during the first half of the menstrual cycle due to the fewer amounts of hormones in the body at that time as opposed to after ovulation (I believe). I read this after I had scheduled the biopsy, which was, of course, after I had ovulated that month. I was very apprehensive when I went to the hospital and told this to the receptionist. After a while, they sent the intern out to talk to me. I explained to him what I had read and he told me that, in that hospital, they did not find that the timing of the biopsy was relevant. Period. No other explanation was offered. He said it as if it was just his opinion. I thanked him and went back to think about it some more. A few minutes later the doctor who was to perform the biopsy came out to talk to me. I told her that if the cancer killed me, she would go to work the next day. I would not be able to come back and be with my children so I needed to feel comfortable with every decision that I made. She was very sympathetic and reassuring. I don't remember what she said but she convinced me that it would be OK to have the biopsy. At the end, she walked me back to the changing room, asked be about my kids and told me about some of her other patients who had breast cancer whom she still was seeing 20 years later. That day I realized the importance of being informed about and ultimately being responsible for your own health care. AL

I find myself quite angry due to the fact that I think doctors are what contributed to my mother's stroke. She was doing so well, eating well and although she had slightly elevated blood pressure and cholesterol they talked her into treating it like it was not good enough, bringing her blood pressure down to what would be considered a low normal range. Although she could have said no and did for several years, they finally pressured her into taking regular drugs for these conditions as well as her diabetes. She is one

of those people that think of doctors as gods. But the same doctor and his nurse practitioner responded to her stroke in the following manner. She went to the ER with symptoms of a stroke. It had probably been overnight that she had been experiencing it. They then called her doctor. ON THE PHONE ONLY he asked them to asked her how she felt. She said I guess okay. They then sent her home. Her stroke was a bit unusual as it continued to get worse for 4 days. She called them a couple of times and they said, "If it gets worse, give us a call." She eventually ended up in the hospital for more than a month. Her doctor visited twice. This is about 3 years ago now and not much can be done, but I think had she not listened to all this helpful advice by doctors she would be in a different situation today. SM

In the spring of 2010 I developed terrible feminine itching. I assumed it was a yeast infection and tried over the counter remedies. Things got worse and even sleep at night was difficult. I am 65, married, but not sexually active, so I was certain it was not a STD. I put up with the problem for a couple of months before deciding I needed to find an OB/GYN (my former wonderful doctor of 30 years had retired). I went to a new doctor and that's when the horrors started. She immediately performed a biopsy of my labia. She did not ask me first! I had never had a biopsy or any surgery and I was frightened. I asked her how much tissue she was cutting and she spread her arms wide and jokingly said "Oh, about this much". That wasn't funny to me. She did not wait even one second after the anesthetic injection and when she began cutting it hurt! Then she proceeded to "inform" me that I had an incurable disease that mostly affects post-menopausal women, i.e. lichen sclerosis. As a very health-conscious person, the word "incurable" made me very upset. I went home and immediately started reading all sorts of sad stories on the internet about how this leads to cancer, requires lifetime medication, ruins all chance for ever having sex again, etc. The doctor put me on an extremely strong steroid. She never instructed me regarding exactly how much to use or specifically how/where to apply the cream. After weeks of no improvement and being very depressed about my "condition", I sought out an expert in the field. I spent time and money traveling to see the expert. No one could positively conclude from the initial biopsy that I actually had lichen sclerosis, but they all put me on powerful steroids anyway. The more I read about steroids the less comfortable I became. I called the original doctor with some questions. I waited all day for her call (that did not bother me), but when she did call her first words were: "It's twenty to seven, you get one question!" I sort of laughed and said "You're kidding, right?" and she replied "No. It's twenty to seven and you get one question." I proceeded to ask her about usage of the medication and she talked down to me as if I were stupid for asking (I do have a Master's degree). I also asked her if I would ever be able to have sexual relations should that possibility ever arise. She said, "Maybe, but it will never feel like it did when you were 20!" I found that comment to be rude, presumptive, and insensitive. At this point I realized I would NEVER go back to her office.

I continued to suffer with incapacitating vulvar and anal itching. As I searched the internet more and more, I chanced upon an article about a person who had my exact symptoms who eventually learned that the problem was a severe allergic reaction to COTTONELLE wet wipes! Suddenly a huge light bulb went on in my head!! I used those exact wipes daily, multiple times daily!! I would use two or three to cleanse after every bowel movement and I would often use them to wipe after urinating. (okay, maybe I was overdoing a bit!). I immediately stopped using them that very day. What happened? Every single symptom started to improve right away! No more itching, the skin began to heal, and I have never had any problem since.

I wrote a letter to the offending doctor in which I pointed out her various rude comments and negative attitude. I told her what I had discovered---that I did NOT ever have lichen sclerosis. I suggested that, should she ever see another patient with similar symptoms, perhaps she would consider an ALLERGY first before cutting. I told her that I hoped this information might save another one of her patients from the intense physical and emotional pain I suffered for many months. Do you think she had the professional courtesy to respond? No. D

About 7 or 8 years ago, at his request, I had a 'baseline' bone density test. My mother and maternal grandfather both had osteoporosis. Somehow the results never got to my doctor. This issue came up again this year when he wanted me to have another. I objected, respectfully, on 3 counts: 1. The hospital couldn't manage to deliver the first test results to him. Why should I pay for a second? After 2 contacts from me, 2 from my doctor, I finally sent a letter to the head of the radiology department pointing out that I was requesting that results be sent to THE DOCTOR WHO REQUESTED THE TEST, and that he had lots of letters after his name. The letter was successful. 2. What do the results of another test tell him? I rather suspected he was thinking of giving me some anti-osteoporosis drug, and I was reasonably sure I didn't want to do that. My reluctance didn't even come from you, Doctor. It came from listening to the evening news. 3. I don't like hospitals, they don't like me, and they weren't that nice to me last time I had the test. Ok, this last one is a lark, but it matters to me. JA

For 10 years (in my younger years) I taught natural childbirth (The Bradley Method -- Dr. Bradley was another doctor whose name was anathema to the medical/birthing community) until I was literally "beaten down" by my own outrage over what was and is still being done to women during labor, childbirth, and breastfeeding. It seems that all areas of women's health are affected by the

same cavalier attitude of oppression and disrespect, except that in labor I think it may be worse because it is not just the woman's body and psyche that is being impacted; it is also her child's overall health and the outcome of the birth that is affected. It seems that any excuse for extreme treatment is tolerated when the laboring woman is told that if she doesn't comply, she could kill her baby. It seems even more poignant when you realize that many of the worst offenders of obstetric and female healthcare are perpetrated by women doctors.

My own outrage at what regularly occurred with my students (one woman was given a c-section after her child had expired in the womb -- why would you need to cut to deliver a dead child?) has stayed with me all these years, making it difficult for me to do much more than splutter in indignation when I hear about the latest abuses and excuses being done to women in labor and childbirth. Now I am of the age for the next round of abuse, that of cutting out my sex organs because they are no longer "useful;" e.g., I haven't given birth in over 30 years. Your rational approach, which includes the tenacity of a pit bull, does not let anyone off the hook in terms of their excuses for their own behavior and lazy intellectual processes.

I think my mother (and father as well) modeled the behavior for their three daughters of questioning the authority of doctors. One sister has been a vegetarian for most of her life, another has been a La Leche League leader for over 40 years, and I, the youngest, taught natural childbirth for over 10 years and had both my children at home, as well as (finally!) including a healthy vegan lifestyle. My daughter continues this legacy by having birthed all three of her children at home, seeking the advice of a naturopath, and providing healthful eating to her family. My mother's legacy of questioning the reasons why a doctor makes a suggestion is truly a thread that runs through the lives of our family.

The story goes that when my mother reached the age that doctors think the solution to every female's health problems include having her uterus removed, her (male) doctor told her that it was time to have a hysterectomy; she didn't need her uterus any longer since she already had her children. In her own inimitable (and very salty) way, which has been toned down for this story, my mother asked the doctor whether he had any children and whether he was planning on having any more. When he replied that his children were all grown, my mother reputedly pointed to his privates and said, "Then why don't you cut those off too, since you aren't using them?" Needless to say, our mother kept her reproductive organs intact until she died many, many years later from the effects of a stroke.

Because of my studies in physical therapy, I have "cracked" the doctor's code of medical terminology (another layer of armor used to intimidate and distance themselves from patients), which gives me more credibility in speaking to those in the medical profession. However, the emotional flooding that still occurs when I am faced with an irrational excuse from a doctor is hard to deal with. I think you have provided me with a few more tools in my armory. ML

I always do Internet research and have brought documentation to doctors visits but I've never had a doctor be happy or impressed with my efforts. 10 years ago they used to become enraged by my own efforts to do research and now they just become mildly irritated. I've never heard of any patient having a positive reaction from a doctor when they brought up something they learned online.

Now I avoid doctors as much as possible. When I feel its necessary, I practice self-diagnosis via the Internet and use doctors to confirm my suspicions. I also select my own treatments via my own research and I shop around for a doctor who agrees with me. I don't argue with them. I just nod my head. Take the prescription but don't have it filled. Leave & try another doctor. Of course, my chronic conditions are not life threatening. Fibromyalgia, irritable bowel, acid reflux, PMS, peripheral neuropathy, sleep apnea, anxiety, depression, osteoarthritis, gout, obesity, various ear and sinus conditions.

A couple of more notes on this topic. Doctors appear to feel entitled to be more rude if you are overweight. Second, unlike TV commercials, I never get to have a civilized discussion with a doctor in a well-appointed office where I'm fully dressed. My brief conversations are in a cramped and poorly ventilated exam room where the doctor grabs the chart off the wall outside the door to read my name as he walks in. He's fully dressed in a uniform of authority and I'm in various states of undress, which means I start the conversation from a position of discomfort and vulnerability. I always feel like I'm on an assembly line and the faster I spit out my problem so he can hand me the paper for pills the happier he will be. One more thing -- to my surprise, women doctors are worse than men. I expected more compassion from women and found they are more defensive and judgmental. Male doctors are arrogant and dismissive but they usually think my opinion is so unimportant they don't bother to get upset if I ask questions or make suggestions. L

A few months ago I made an appointment with a doctor who promotes himself as interested in nutrition. While sitting in his wait-

waiting room, I looked around and noticed a station providing complimentary coffee, sugar and artificial creamer. Two corners of the room were filled with vending machines for carbonated drinks, candy and junk food. Needless to say, I didn't keep my appointment but left and went home!

His online bio says he's "board certified in Preventive Medicine and takes a keen interest in nutrition, vitamins and exercise." It continues "He is a member of the American College for the Advancement of Medicine which is the leading alternative medical society." His professional and academic credentials are very impressive. He is a family man. I believe that he's a "nice guy" with good intentions. But it seems that he (and others) should be required by professional organizations to adhere to standards of integrity and respect for their patients - in other words, to "practice what they preach". JB.

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