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Pensees

Or, after 50 years in practice, what I sometimes tell patients

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Don't try a new drug on a patient till it has been on the market for one year. For your family, wait 5 years.

A test was unnecessary if it turns out normal. But are you going to complain?

Some people have a condition called "your number is up".

A therapeutic test means that if the treatment works, then maybe you had the right diagnosis, unless, of course, it was some other diagnosis.

If the placebo works almost as well as the therapy, then the therapy is not better than the placebo no matter what any statistician says.

I challenge anyone to tell when a sore throat is caused by a virus and not a bacterial colony without doing 14 days of tests at the Center for Disease Control. That's why we older docs give antibiotics. That's also why we don't see cases of acute rheumatic fever any more.

The Physicians Desk Reference now has 3500 pages of 8 point type. I know all the drugs in there in minutest detail except for the one you just asked about.

We were taught in medical school to learn only about 20 drugs, but learn them well. Now the doctor should know 500 but he might barely know the names of most of them. Don't tell anybody I said that.

I liked it better what they said in 1890 when my great grandmother died in childbirth at home. It was God's Will. Better than it's the doctor's fault and let's sue.

Want to know what to do for grief or depression? Get up every morning, say a blessing that you are still breathing, and go to work.

I am just as perplexed about the here before as I am about the here after.

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Socrates had a theory that the soul knew everything before it was born, then forgot; his job was to ask questions of people till they remembered what they had always known.

I'm trying to learn everything there is to know and I am almost finished.

William Osler, the great one, was not incensed when someone failed to follow his instructions. He said, now we will find out which one of us is wrong.

Fifty years ago we dispensed a lot of placebos. There were green and pink APC's, pink and chocolate aspirins, and Caripeptic liquid which smelled and looked like tar. Now I don't know any doctor who dispenses or uses placebos. Now you can get all the quack medicines you want at the health food store.

There were and are pure placebos and impure placebos. Sugar is a pure placebo. Aspirin is an impure placebo because it actually does something.

I once asked a health food store owner if the whole bran she was selling was pasteurized and if she knew how many rat droppings or mouse hairs the FDA allowed in that product. She thought a minute, then proudly replied that any rat or mouse that was eating that stuff was therefore healthy and not to worry.

I don't know if you know this, but doctors joke around a lot while they are operating on you. We once had an anesthesiologist who used to say "this patient is ruined; get me a new one". People like their doctors to have a sense of humor.

Or how about this: what should the doctor do if the patient walks out of the office and drops dead in the hallway? Call 911? No. First he should turn the patient around so it looks as if he had been coming in. Sorry; I can't resist sick jokes.

Are you sure you want a complete checkup? In the old days, a complete physical examination included an exploratory abdominal operation, burr holes in your head, a spinal tap, bronchoscopy, sigmoidoscopy, and gastroscopy. A complete exam was fatal.

I heard that some new doctors must have training in abortions. Does that mean that some day training in euthanasia and physician assisted suicide will be mandatory? Think about it. Could you trust a doctor who is lawfully able to end your life? Pardon my political incorrectness, but instead I would favor a course in the biblical commandments, or as I refer to them, the prescriptions for a good life.