

When is testing useless, a distraction, or even worse?

**SELLING SICKNESS 2013
PEOPLE BEFORE PROFITS**

Panel: Problems with Routine Screening

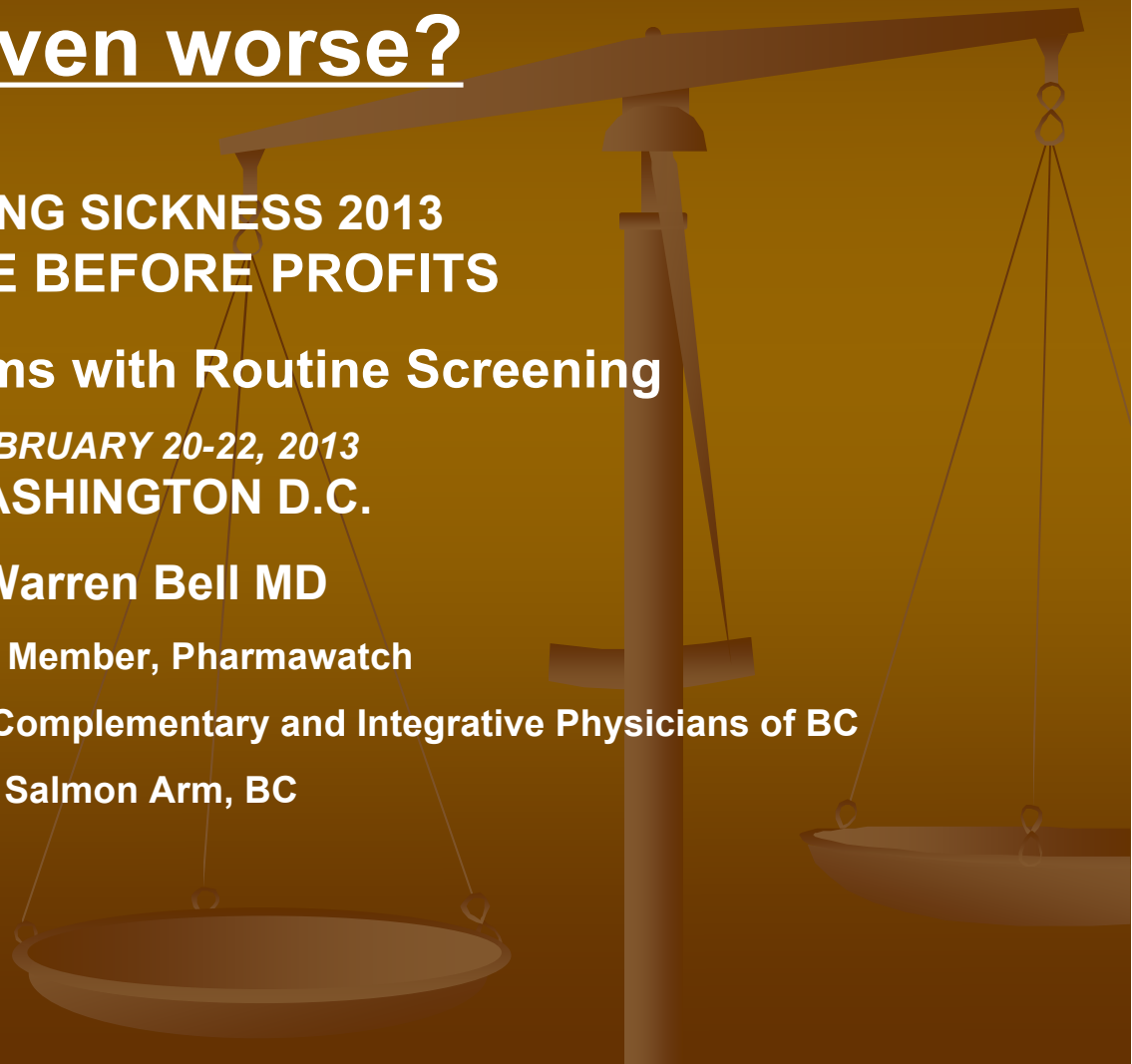
FEBRUARY 20-22, 2013
WASHINGTON D.C.

Warren Bell MD

Board Member, Pharmawatch

Past President, Association of Complementary and Integrative Physicians of BC

Salmon Arm, BC



OH MY! IN THE OREGONIAN © 2010
B/T TRIBUNE MEDIA SERVICES

**KEYLESS
LAPTOP**



BOTTOMLESS BOAT



**WINGLESS
PLANE**



**TIRELESS
CAR**



**ROTORLESS
HELICOPTER**



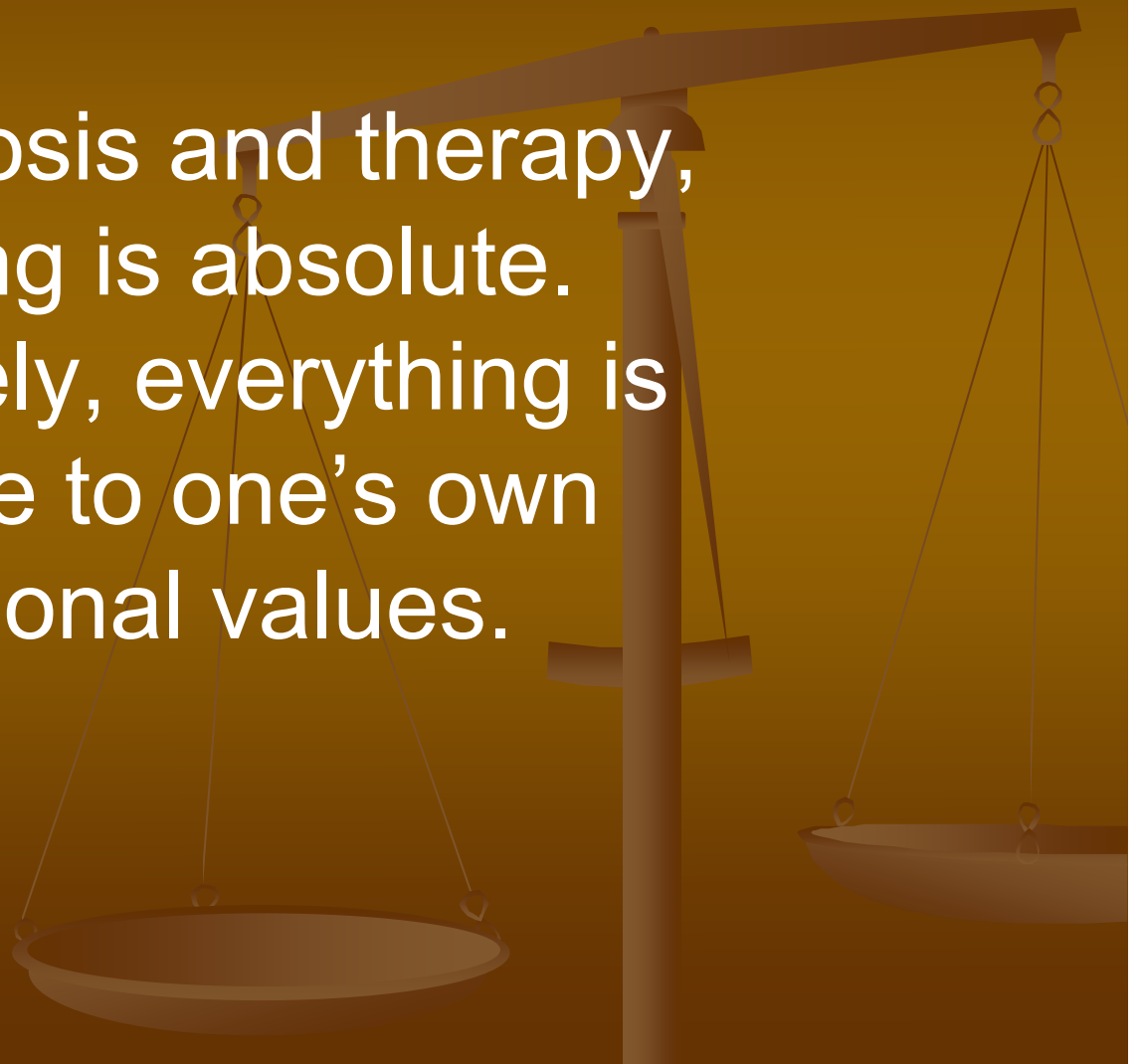
**SCREENLESS
TELEVISION**

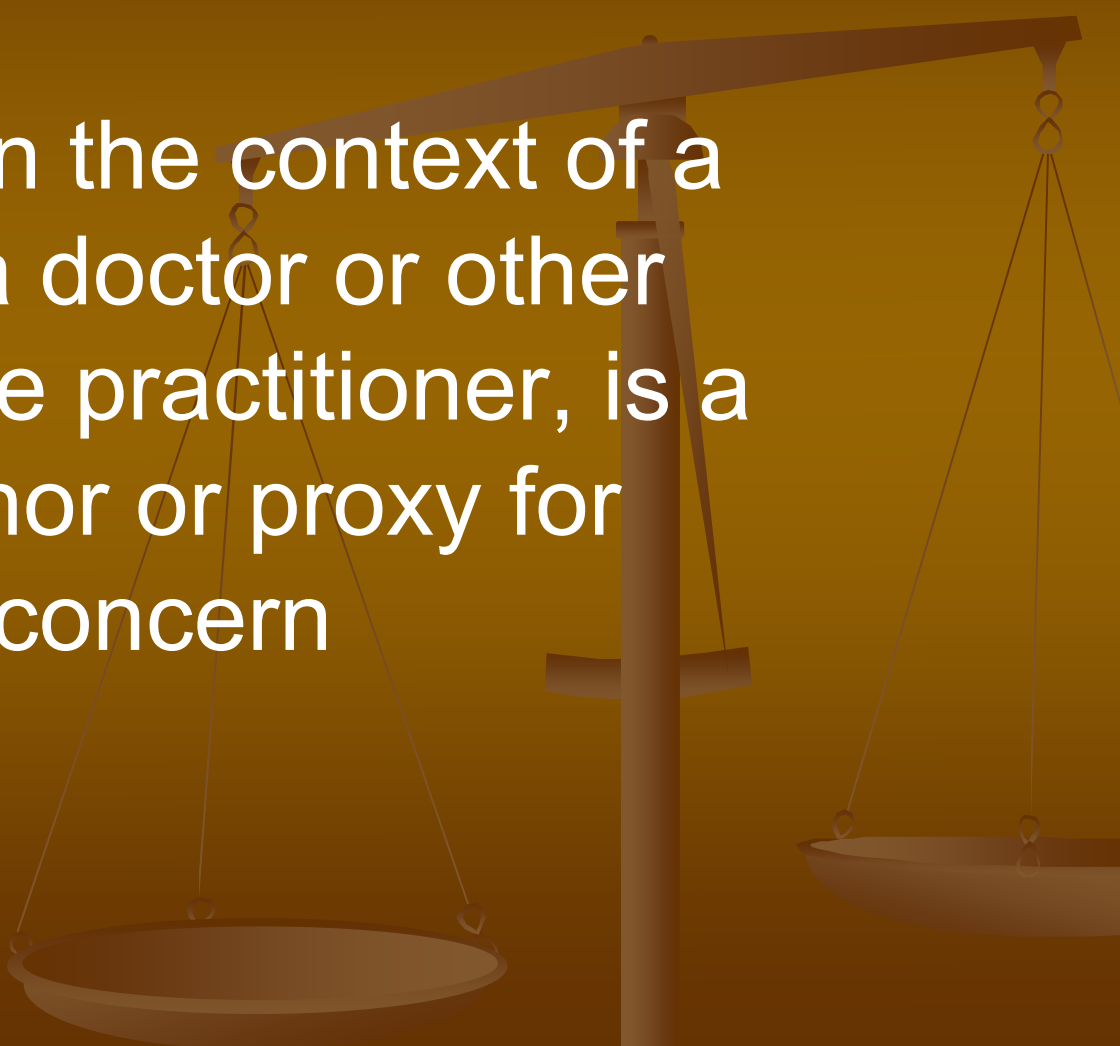


**JOBLESS
RECOVERY**



In diagnosis and therapy,
nothing is absolute.
Ultimately, everything is
relative to one's own
personal values.



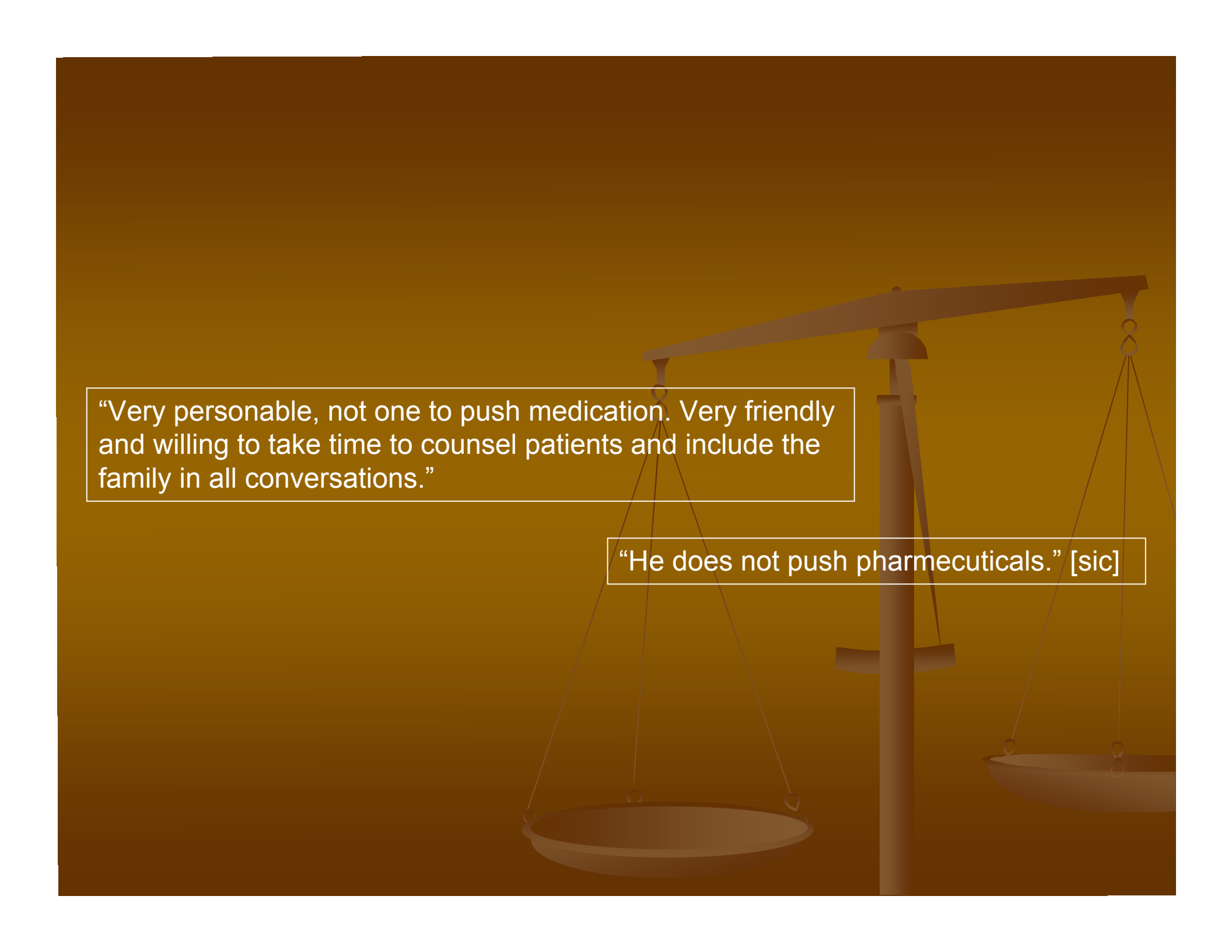


Testing, in the context of a visit to a doctor or other health care practitioner, is a metaphor or proxy for concern

<http://www.ratemds.com/doctor-ratings/73276/Dr-Warren-Bell-Salmon+Arm-BC.html>

“He doesn't believe in important tests for people in my age group. I fired him when he gave me a physical and only looked at me, and am now being professional treated by another local physician.”

“My aunt has ... major asthma and has been asking for many breathing tests and he said they are not necessary!She asked for a blood test and he said it was not necessary! My mom had to go see him for a complete physical and he looked at her ankles and told her she was in perfect health!” [Emphasis added]



“Very personable, not one to push medication. Very friendly and willing to take time to counsel patients and include the family in all conversations.”

“He does not push pharmaceuticals.” [sic]

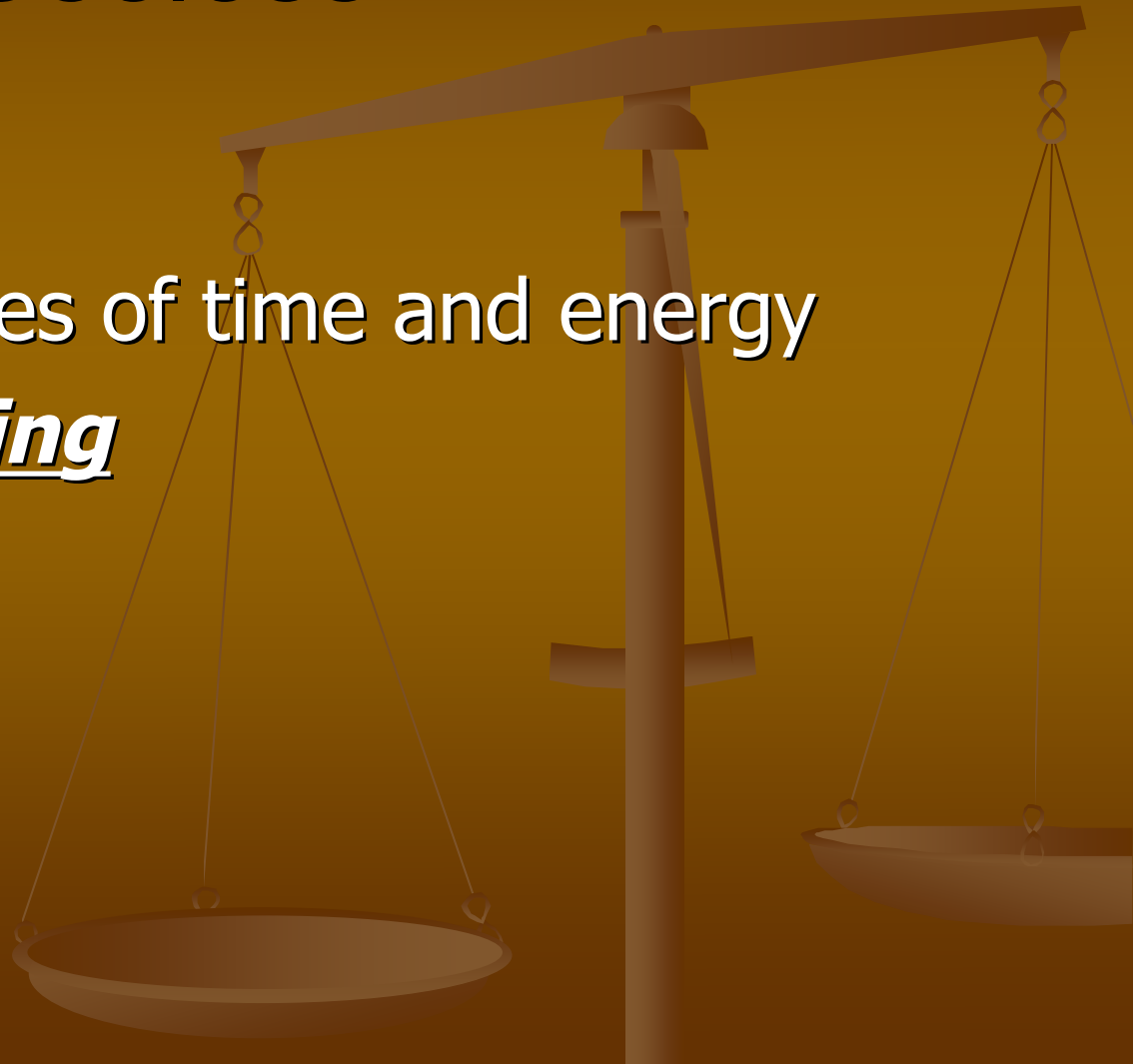
What the Good Guys do....

“Not once has he refused any kind of treatment if it stood any chance of helping me. He is not afraid to get on my case if I get tardy about going for tests or treatment he has decided on.”

<http://www.ratemds.com/doctor-ratings/72134/Dr-Bryan-Bass-Duncan-BC.html>

Useless

- Costs money
- Uses up resources of time and energy
- ***Changes nothing***



Useless?



Useless...

A “complete medical check-up”

vs the “Periodic Health Exam”



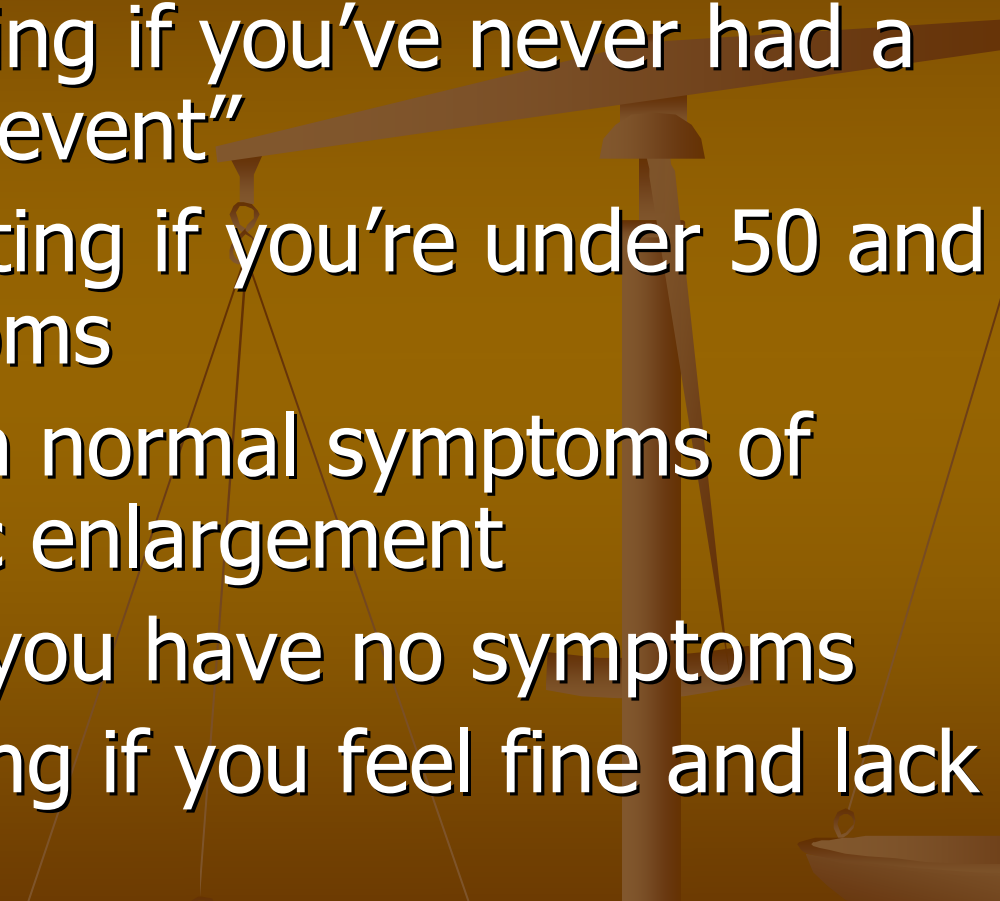
© Original Artist
Reproduction rights obtainable from
www.CartoonStock.com



search ID: jfa1854

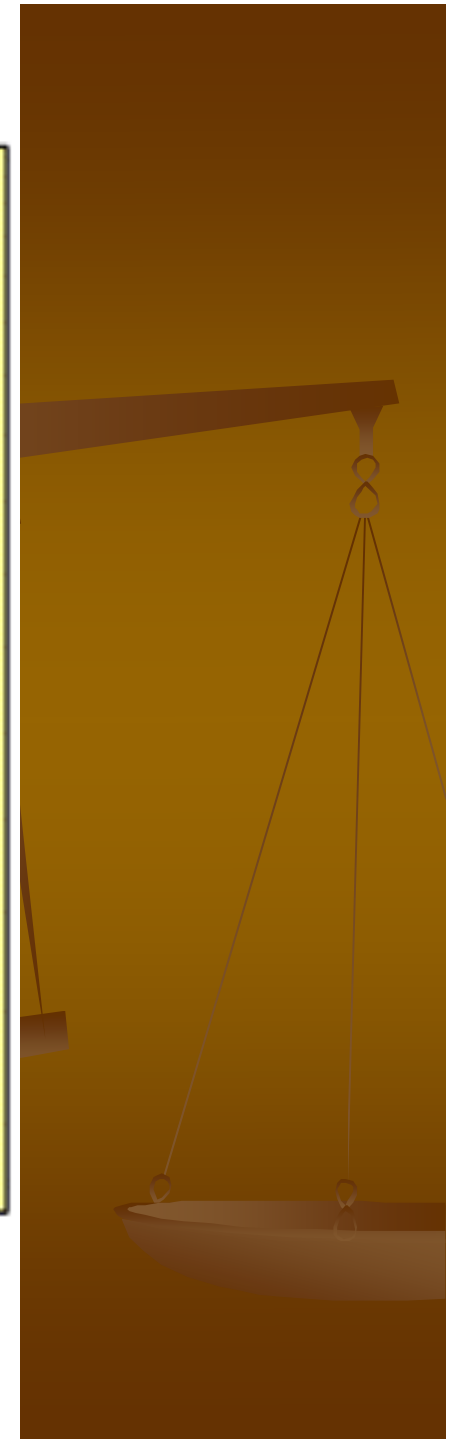
**"The fact that you're a malpractice lawyer aside,
I'm going to schedule every medical test known to mankind."**

...Useless

- Cholesterol testing if you've never had a cardiovascular "event"
 - Blood sugar testing if you're under 50 and have no symptoms
 - PSA testing with normal symptoms of benign prostatic enlargement
 - Urine testing if you have no symptoms
 - Electrolyte testing if you feel fine and lack symptoms
- 



“Off hand, I'd say you're suffering from an arrow through your head, but just to play it safe, I'm ordering a bunch of tests.”



Some context....



SURVIVAL OF THE SICKEST

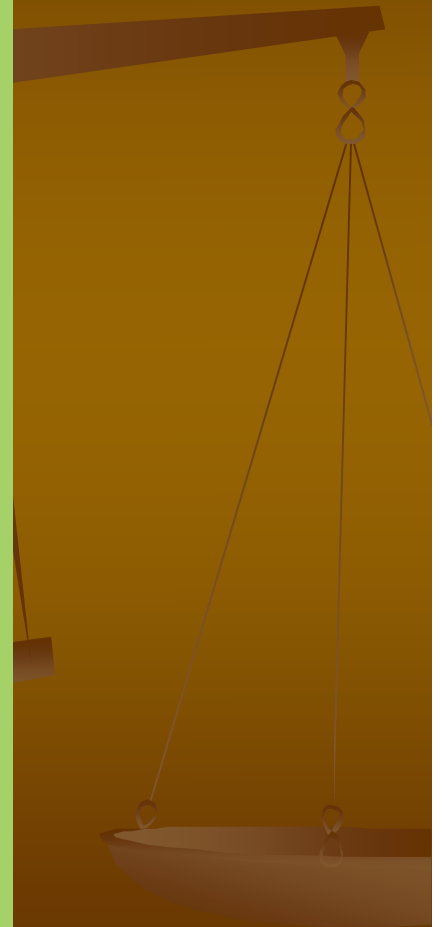
“FASCINATING!”

—MEHMET OZ, coauthor of *YOU: The Owner's Manual*

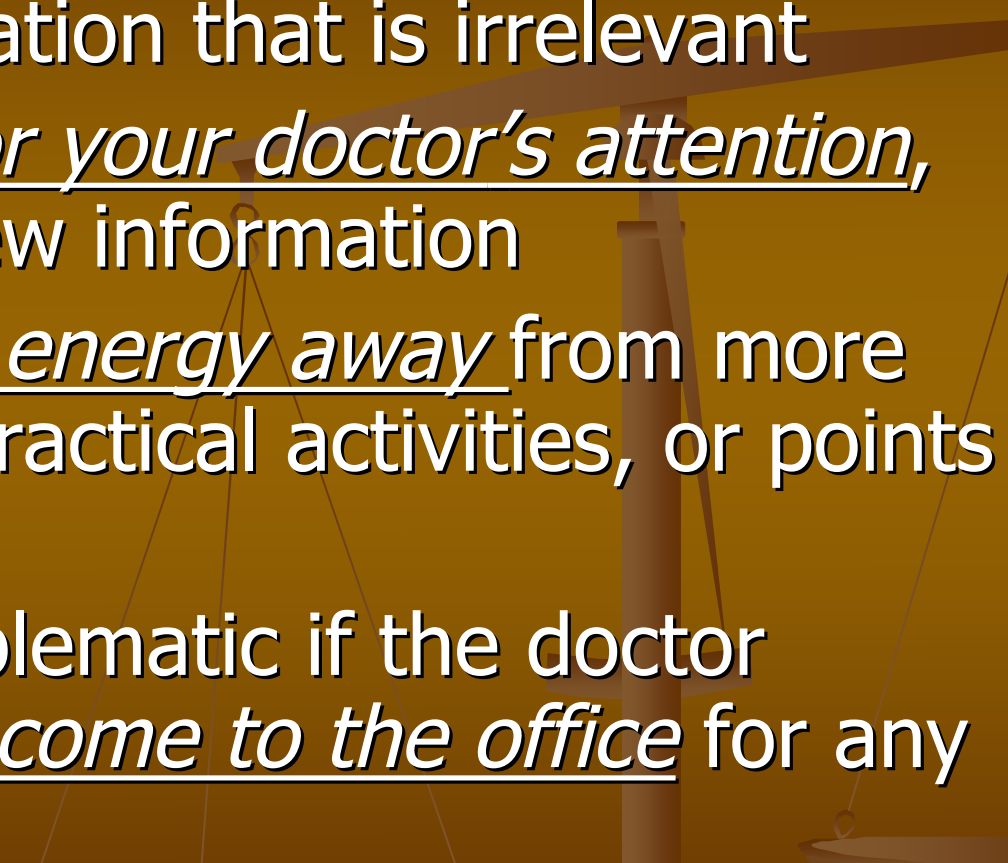


**A Medical Maverick
Discovers Why
We Need Disease**

DR. SHARON MOALEM
WITH JONATHAN PRINCE



A distraction

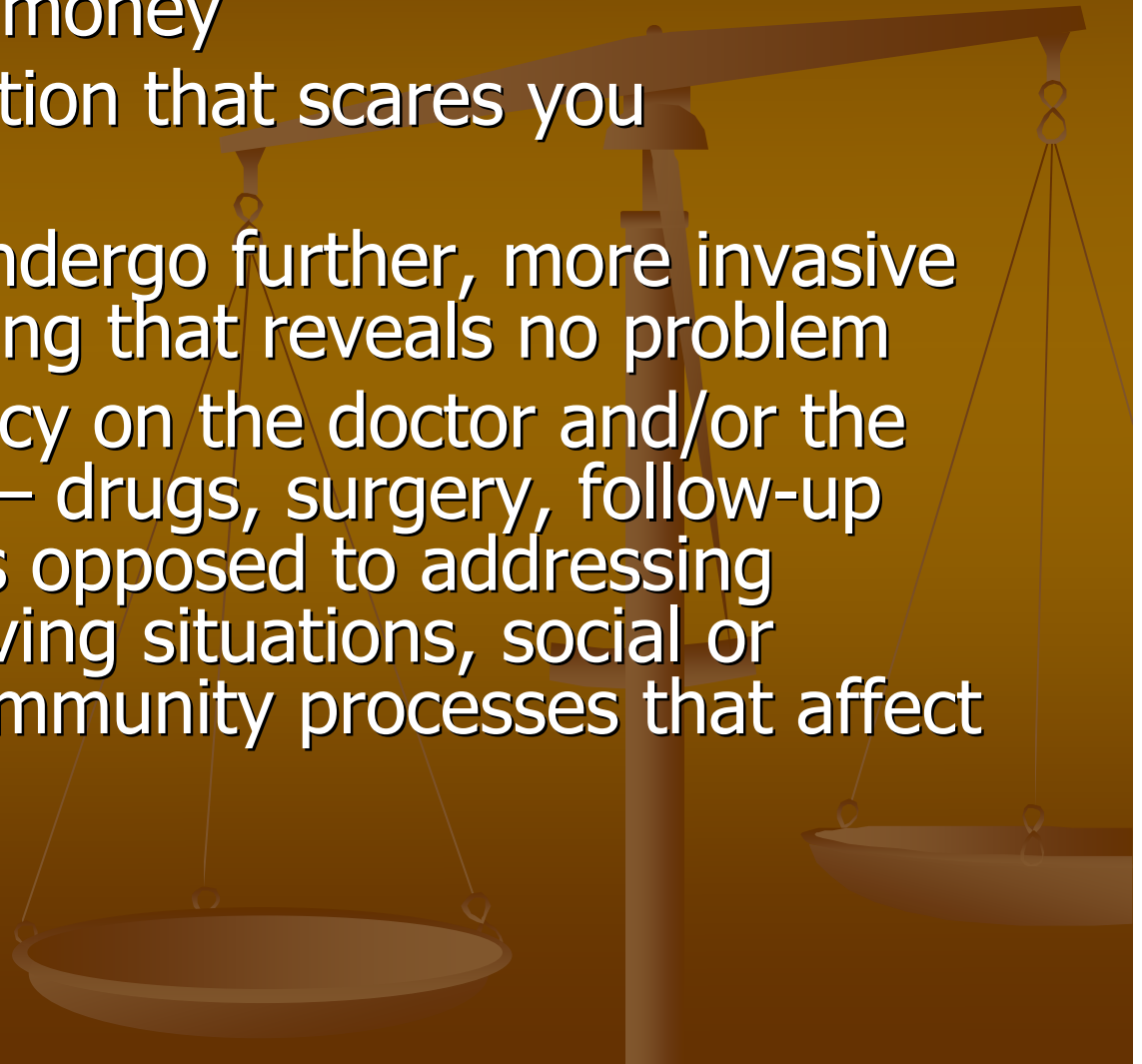
- Supplies information that is irrelevant
 - Captures your or your doctor's attention, but offers no new information
 - Takes time and energy away from more meaningful or practical activities, or points of interest
 - Particularly problematic if the doctor insists that you come to the office for any results
- 



*"The results are a bit surprising...
You are healthier than you look..."*

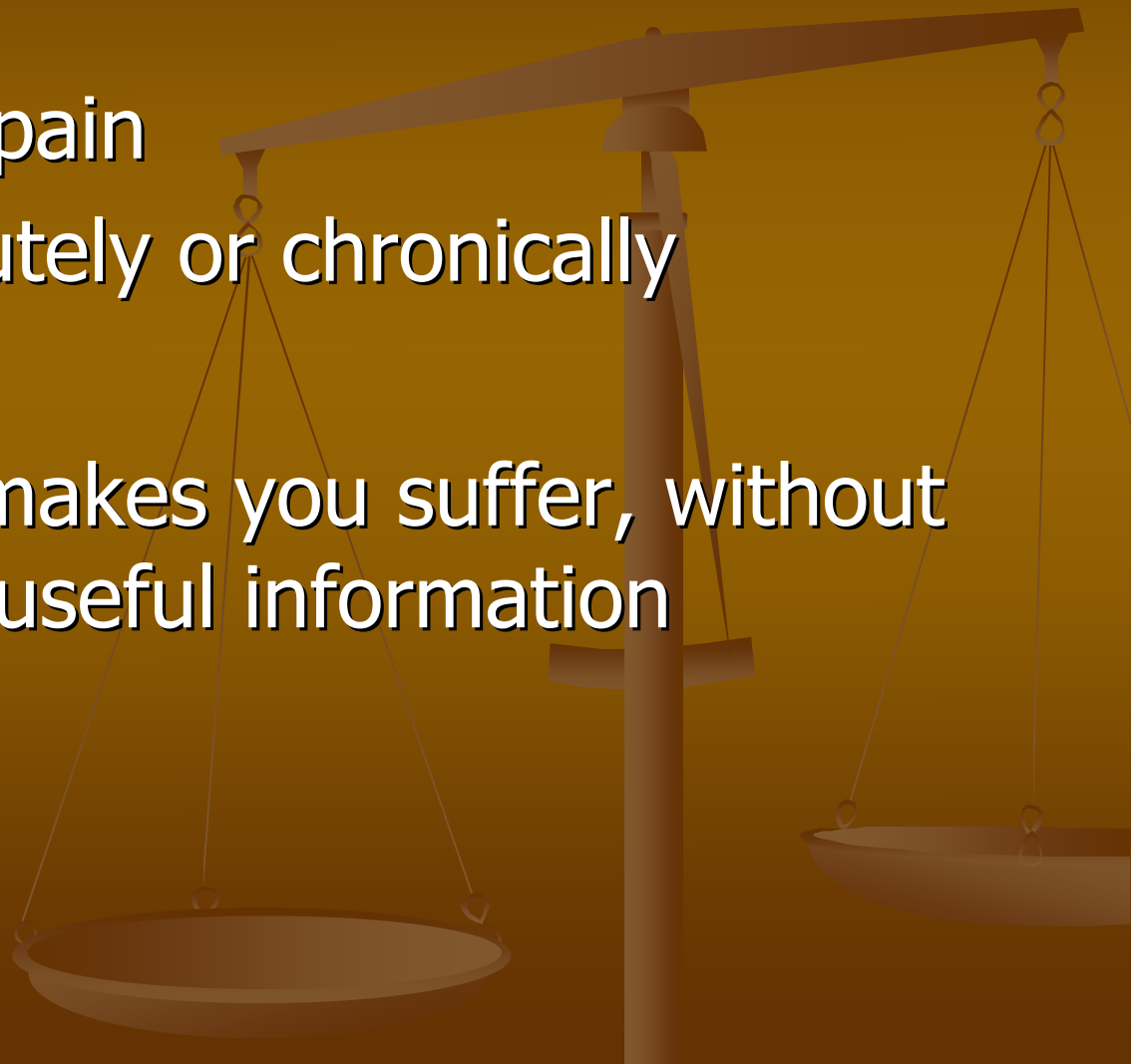
...or worse.

- Costs you a lot of money
- Gives you information that scares you unnecessarily
- Compels you to undergo further, more invasive or dangerous testing that reveals no problem
- Creates dependency on the doctor and/or the medical "system" – drugs, surgery, follow-up tests and visits, as opposed to addressing personal habits, living situations, social or cultural issues, community processes that affect health

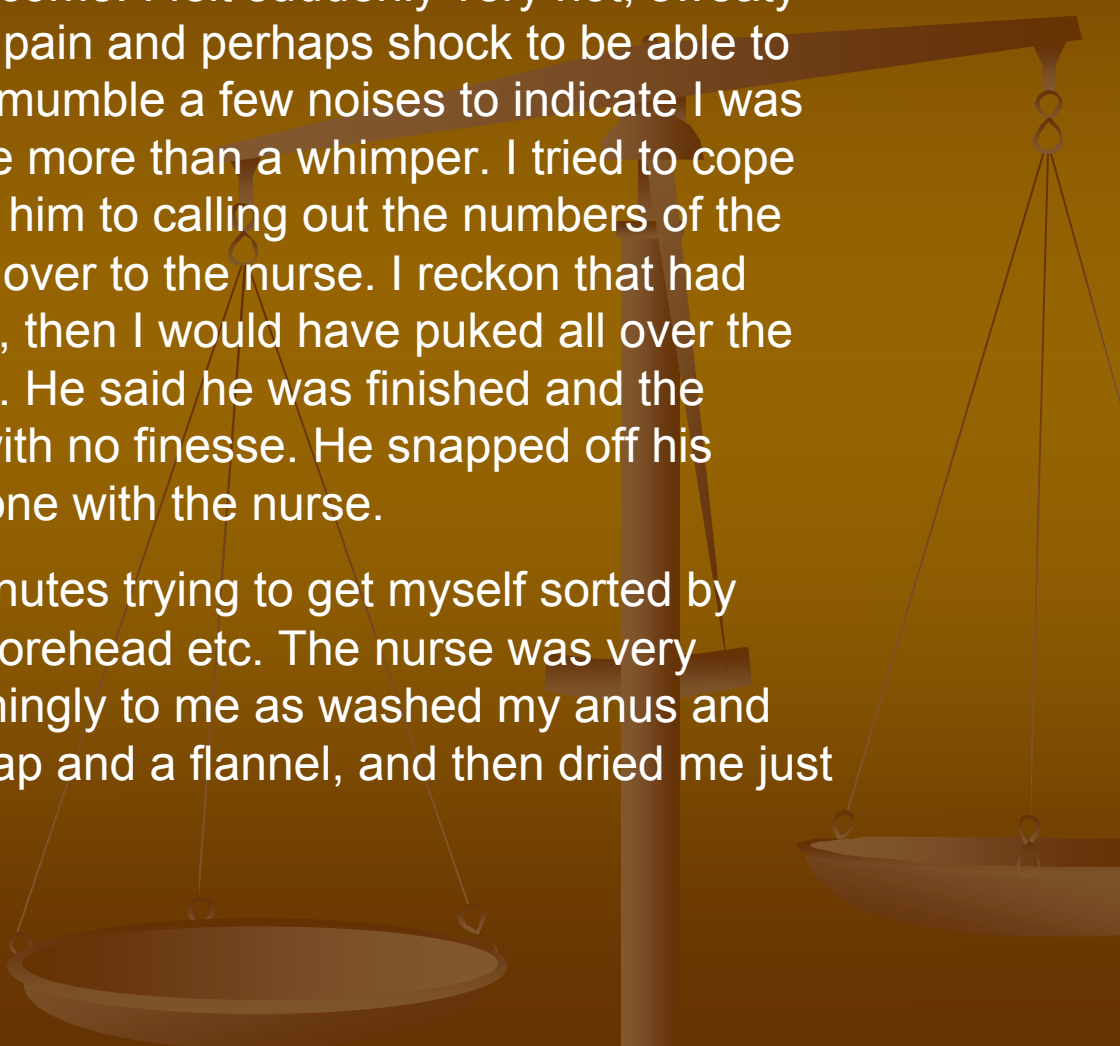


Or even worse...

- Causes a lot of pain
- Injures you, acutely or chronically
- Disables you
- Harms you, or makes you suffer, without giving clinically useful information







“It was the worst pain I had ever experienced, and as the pain was already too much by about the third needle, it was grim knowing that there were so many more to come. I felt suddenly very hot, sweaty and dizzy. I was in too much pain and perhaps shock to be able to say anything. I could merely mumble a few noises to indicate I was having a bad time; it was little more than a whimper. I tried to cope by concentrating on listening him to calling out the numbers of the samples as he handed them over to the nurse. I reckon that had there been just one more jab, then I would have puked all over the wall and probably fainted too. He said he was finished and the device was pulled from me with no finesse. He snapped off his rubber gloves and left me alone with the nurse.

I had to lie there for a few minutes trying to get myself sorted by breathing slowly, wiping my forehead etc. The nurse was very sympathetic and talked soothingly to me as washed my anus and buttocks with warm water soap and a flannel, and then dried me just as gently.”

So what should happen when you go and see your doctor?

- You go for a specific reason – a symptom or a worry or an injury (or several)
 - You are listened to as you tell your story, and questioned closely
 - You work with the doctor to decide what to do, and it should make sense (be useful)
 - If there are harms, you learn about them in detail, alongside benefits
 - Treatment is never the only possible outcome of your visit
- 