Tests I Wish You'd Never Ordered

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Disclosures:

- I have no conflicts of interest
- All comments are strictly my own opinions

When I was a resident…

“Don’t just do something - stand there!”

-M. Gabel and others (1945)

“Smoke a cigar”

-B. Rabinowitz DO, FACOI

Law # XIII

"the delivery of medical care is to do as much nothing as possible"

from *The House of God* 1978

TESTS I WISH I'D NEVER ORDERED

(A Somewhat Opinionated View of the Expensive and Occasionally Hazardous Corners We Paint Ourselves Into)

G. Blackburn D.O.

December, 1998

WHEN YOU ARE YOUNG, YOU THINK YOU ARE BULLETPROOF, BUT.....

SOMEDAY, YOU WILL BE A PATIENT

(Blackburn's Law #4?)

“If the patient is not dead, there is always something more we can do to make him/her worse”

- Freank Vertosick Jr. MD (a neurosurgeon) as paraphrased by Rick Greco DO, MACOI

The retelling of a true story:

- A healthy, intelligent, gentleman of European descent was seen in my office, accompanied by his very "proper" wife of 50+ years, for evaluation and possible treatment of syphilis, this all the result of a +VDRL (and subsequent +FTA) ordered by a superb neurologist "to be complete" in the workup of a mild peripheral neuropathy

- Over an hour was spent w/ the couple, assuring both the pt and his wife that these studies were perfectly compatible with infection contracted long before their marriage (most likely while serving overseas in the military), and were of no important medical significance (at least to me)

- The neurologist readily admitted that syphilis was the most remote diagnosis he would have ever considered.
  In fact, even after the serologies were found to be positive, he judged no connection between these results and his working diagnoses in the evaluation of this patient

- There was no evidence to suggest cardiovascular or neurosyphilis.
  Diagnosis: late latent syphilis
- Tx: arguably unnecessary; however, insisted upon by both the pt and his wife. 3 weekly injections of benzathine penicillin were given w/o complications
- Following tx, he was referred back to his family physician

Several months later, his family physician informed me that his wife was never able to forgive him for this, totally destroying their marriage

As a result, he went out to his backyard, put a gun in his mouth and ended it all……..

Thank you for listening, and a HUGE

THANK YOU

to the many ACOI members that have contributed to this panel towards improving patient care by limiting unnecessary and sometimes dangerous tests, medications and/or procedures over the past two decades because, at least in part, ……

Someday, you, as well as all those you love,

will be a patient

Today's prestigious, incredibly knowledgable, and highly opinionated panel:

- Mark Baldwin DO, FACOI - Nephrology
- Bryan Martin DO, MACOI - Allergy/Immunology
- Patrick Cullinan DO, FACOI - Critical Care
- Lauren Mazzurco DO, FACOI - Palliative Care