

HELLO LHSSL MEMBERS AND FAMILIES!!!

This marks the return of the Wellness Report. After an eight month hiatus, I am once again cranking up the Wellness Report. Most of you are familiar with the Wellness Report, but for new members this year, this is a periodic report that touches on timely medical information in an effort to inform and clarify complicated medical issues. Previous Wellness Reports are archived on the LHSSL website under "Info and Rules" and click on Doc's Corner.

In the WELLNESS REPORT I will try to touch on subjects not previously covered, or update those that require updating. I am open to suggestions also, so please feel free to drop me a request at [stocker.9913@gmail.com](mailto:stocker.9913@gmail.com)

At the end of this report is a poignant last letter written by Steve Jobs that bears reading.

OK, let's get going. As a medical provider since 1977, I have been used to being on the giving end of treatments and procedures, not the receiving end. However, as time marches on, I find that I am increasingly scheduling visits with a variety of medical professionals. I now have an internal medicine doctor for most of my general needs, a cardiologist because of my family history and my experience with Atrial fibrillation a few years ago, a gastroenterologist for my regularly scheduled colonoscopy, an ear, nose, and throat specialist for ear issues, an audiologist for my hearing aids, a dermatologist to treat the ravages of being a lifelong sun worshiper, and a dentist for keeping all my teeth healthy.

It is during these visits, and through my continued educational contacts with medical education courses, that I have observed a tectonic shift in how medicine is being practiced. In some ways it is better, but in many ways it is completely foreign from what our generation has come to expect.

One of the more noticeable changes is in who owns and operates medical practices. Solo practices are an endangered species. Overhead costs, and government and insurance company requirements drive overhead costs higher, and cause practices to consolidate.

A new twist has recently appeared, where instead of hospitals and insurance companies purchasing medical practices, now venture capital investors are snapping up specialty practices. The net result of these changes is often a loss of the personal relationship between patient and doctor that we all have come to expect. Bottom line business practices are forcing physicians to spend less time with the patient, and delegate many tasks to physician extenders like nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and medical assistants. Time is money, and now physicians are spending less time with their patients. This is not universal yet, but expect it to be more common.

Complicating this situation is a growing shortage of physicians and providers. As the population increases, as more people have insurance coverage, and as the population ages, demand for healthcare increase and supply currently is unable to keep up. The result is inevitable backups, long waiting times to see specialists especially, and potential dangerous delays in needed treatments and diagnosis of problems. Emergency rooms will be overloaded, as well as urgent care facilities.

My suggestion is to maintain your relationships with your current trusted physicians, and make your necessary appointments and checkups well in advance. Make your time with the physician quality time by focusing your and the doctor's time by writing out your questions and concerns ahead of time, and present them to the assistant when you are taken to the examination room. Prioritize your questions. Chitchat and usual personal small talk are sadly rapidly disappearing. Make sure the doctor answers your priority questions and addresses these before you leave.

Medicine is becoming more a big business and not the old personal relation between you and your doctor. While technology, new procedures, and new medicines have made things better, it is up to you to make sure you get what you are paying for from your visits.

Alright, that was a bit of a downer, but that is the reality, and I have been seeing it up close and personally myself with my physician visits.

Lastly, I want to discuss a little known but increasingly important newer medical specialty. PALLIATIVE CARE SPECIALISTS. These newer specialists, like hospitalists and intensive care specialists, have developed over the last few years to meet needs that were not being adequately met.

Many believe palliative care treatment is just another form of hospice, but it is far from it. While Palliative care can be used prior to hospice in critically and terminally ill patients, palliative care is a team approach medical specialty focused on providing relief from the symptoms and stress of a serious illness. It is care that can be provided to people of any age and any stage of illness. This palliative care approach helps coordinate all levels of care, ease your pain, reduce your stress, and improve your chance of survival.

The good news is that most major hospitals like Kaiser and Sutter have established palliative care departments and specialists. I suggest that all of you take the time and find out if your insurance plan has this specialty, and if any educational talks on the subject are available. This is an invaluable resource to have and use if necessary.

Kaiser's head of palliative care is Dr. Shelly Garone, a board certified internal medicine physician who has specialized training in this new specialty. Shelly has lectured on palliative care at Lincoln Hills, and I suggest watching to see if she is on the schedule again. She is

bright, personable, and a great teacher. As a bonus, Shelly went to my daughter's high school, and worked in my office during the summer before her junior year at Tufts. I have known her for almost thirty years.

While none of us expect to have a major illness or a life-threatening condition, it is good to remember this resource just in case. Please share with family and friends.

Again, welcome back to the WELLNESS REPORT. While I no longer live in Lincoln Hills, my bond remains strong to the community, and especially all of those at LHSSL. Stay well, have fun, and make every hit count. Be sure to read Steve Jobs letter about the six best doctors. Thanks for your continued friendship.

Doc Stocker

\*\*\*\*\*

**Steve Jobs Died a billionaire at age 56. This is his final essay: Worth reading twice.**

I reached the pinnacle of success in the business world. In some others' eyes, my life is the epitome of success. However, aside from work, I have little joy. In the end, my wealth is only a fact of life that I am accustomed to. At this moment, lying on my bed and recalling my life, I realize that all the recognition and wealth that I took so much pride in have paled and become meaningless in the face of my death.

You can employ someone to drive the car for you, make money for you but you cannot have someone bear your sickness for you. Material things lost can be found or replaced. But there is one thing that can never be found when it's lost - Life. Whichever stage in life you are in right now, with time, you will face the day when the curtain comes down.

Treasure love for your family, love for your spouse, love for your friends. Treat yourself well and cherish others. As we grow older, and hopefully wiser, we realize that a \$300 or a \$30 watch both tell the same time. You will realize that your true inner happiness does not come from the material things of this world. Whether you fly first class or economy, if the plane goes down - you go down with it.

Therefore, I hope you realize, when you have mates, buddies and old friends, brothers and sisters, who you chat with, laugh with, talk with, have sing songs with, talk about north-south-east-west or heaven and earth, that is true happiness! Don't educate your children to be rich. Educate them to be happy. So when they grow up they will know the value of things and not the price. Eat your food as your medicine, otherwise you

have to eat medicine as your food.

The One who loves you will never leave you for another because, even if there are 100 reasons to give up, he or she will find a reason to hold on. There is a big difference between a human being and being human. Only a few really understand it. You are loved when you are born. You will be loved when you die. In between, you have to manage!

**The six best doctors in the world are sunlight, rest, exercise, diet, self-confidence and friends. Maintain them in all stages and enjoy a healthy life."**

Very wise words.