

VH CV#738A. Herbert V. Will genuine health care be overwhelmed by questionable and fraudulent care? *J Invest Med* 1996;44(3):323A.

**WILL GENUINE HEALTH CARE BE OVERWHELMED BY QUESTIONABLE AND FRAUDULENT CARE?** V Herbert, Mount Sinai & Bronx Veterans' Affairs Medical Centers, NYC, NY.

Specious logic is overwhelming the logic of science. Politicians and the media prefer magic to science: magic makes headlines, science doesn't. Health fraud offers magic cures: science doesn't. The elements of fraud are deception and profit. All health fraud is based on deception by omission of adverse facts: worthless to harmful products and services are represented as effective and safe. The 2 major health frauds are fraudulent "alternatives" and fraudulent "supplements." There are 3 kinds of alternatives: genuine, questionable, and fraudulent. A genuine alternative is one that successfully answers the 3 basic questions regarding any proposed therapy: 1) Efficacy: Is it more effective than suggestion? 2) Safety: Is it as safe as suggestion? 3) The Efficacy:Safety Ratio: If there is any question re safety, does the potential for benefit exceed the potential for harm? Unlike responsible health professionals, profiteers from health frauds do not keep score to determine efficacy and safety. Instead, they conceal all their failures, and produce only happy patients "cured" of diseases they never had, of diseases in remission as part of the natural history of the disorder, or from appropriate therapy prior to or concurrent with the quack therapy, or in spontaneous remission unrelated to the quack cure. Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) got a bill through Congress ramming down the NIH's throat an "Office of Alternative Medicine" (OAM) to be overseen by Iowa layman Frank Wiewel, a major profiteer in the fraudulent cancer cure industry. Harkin & Wiewel, and cronies Ralph Moss and Berkeley Bedell force OAM to lend credibility to every "alternative" fraud which comes down the pike. Sen Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) put through Congress a 1994 snake oil Supplement Act, which, on one hand, forbids the FDA from assessing purity, efficacy, or safety of any scam whose seller chooses to label it "supplement" and, on the other hand, rams down the NIH's throat a "supplement"-promoting unit which Sen Hatch wants overseen by his former aide, layman Loren Israelson, President of the \$1-billion/yr Utah arm of the \$5-billion/yr US "supplement" industry. S Barrett and I synthesized the facts in *The Vitamin Pushers: How the "Health Food" Industry is Selling America a Bill of Goods* (Prometheus Press, Amherst, NY, 1994, 536 pp). We "busted" the "antioxidant" scams most recently in *J Nutr* 1996 (April) in a symposium on "The prooxidant effects of 'antioxidant' supplements." Facts don't interest politicians. They want campaign money from fraud profiteers. Fraudulent health care will win.