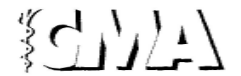




# North Coast Physician



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**"PEPPERS A PLENTY"**

STEPHEN KAMELGARN, M.D.

*The Editorial and Publications Committee encourages our member's comments for publication.*

*Please submit electronically prior to the 15th of the month preceding publication.*

North Coast Physician is published monthly by the Humboldt-Del Norte County Medical Society, 3100 Edgewood Road, P.O. Box 6457, Eureka, CA 95502. Telephone: (707) 442-2367; FAX: (707) 442-8134; E-Mail: hdncms@sbcglobal.net Web page: www.hdncms.org

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# Crab

Lee Leer, M.D.



As is often the case when it comes time for me to sit down and write one of these editorials, I've been drawing a blank in terms of ideas. Then, just when I thought all was lost, some dear friends called this morning and invited Nancy and me to go to their home for a fresh crab dinner. At which point it occurred to me: it doesn't matter what I write, or even if I write anything at all, because I'm going to eat crab tonight! And that, after all, is what's really important. The North Coast Physician and its dozen or so avid fans can do without my missives. And even if I fail to meet the deadline for publication, so what? I'm still going to eat crab! Fresh crab from the Humboldt Bay! It doesn't, as I'm sure you all know, get much better than that.

Another thing that happened this morning, as it does every morning, is that I read the newspapers. By which I mean the comics. Doonesbury this morning brought back a favorite character from the past: Mr. Butts (who - for those of you who haven't grown up as I have with Gary Trudeau's brilliant little cartoon family - is a walking, talking, human sized cigarette and "spokesperson" for the tobacco industry). From Mr. Butts, I learned about how the states are NOT spending the money they're getting from the 1998 tobacco settlement. The idea at the time was that states would use this windfall to do more public health work on smoking cessation, especially targeting children. It was, after all, money the states didn't have before the settlement, it was not included in any state budgets for other essential needs, thus one would assume that said windfall would go towards tobacco education, cessation research, etc., right? Well. It is estimated that in the first 25 years of the program, the states will receive about \$246 billion (yes, that's with a "b"). And,

don't forget, the states collect billions more in tobacco taxes. How much so far have the states in aggregate devoted to smoking cessation? Take a wild guess before you read on. Nope. You're not even close. In fiscal year 2014, the states will collect \$25 billion in revenue from the tobacco settlement and from tobacco taxes, and they will spend a whopping 1.9% on programs to prevent kids from smoking and to help smokers quit. This number varies quite a bit state by state. Not surprisingly, the tobacco producing states are among the worst offenders. North Carolina, for example, took in \$409.8 million in tobacco-generated revenue. The CDC recommends that the state spend \$99.3 million of that on tobacco use prevention. The state actually spent \$1.2 million. That's about 0.3% of what they took in, and 1.2% of the minimum the CDC recommends.

California, of course is a much more enlightened state. We managed to spend a whopping 16.8% of what the CDC recommends we spend on tobacco use prevention. We took in \$1.5 billion, of which we devoted \$64.8 million to tobacco prevention and cessation programs. Given our population of 38.3 million, that works out to about \$1.70 per Californian. This is way better than the \$0.12/person spent in North Carolina, but still shameful. On the up side, though, I'm eating crab tonight, so who cares!

As I was searching for the comics this morning, I happened to glance at the front page of the Times-Standard. There was a remarkably well-written and well-researched piece on the local effects of global warming and sea level change. To cut to the chase: we're in for a world of hurt here in Humboldt. Highway 101 between Eureka and Arcata? Gone. Gas, electrical, and water lines between Eureka and Arcata? Gone. (And there's way more... read the piece if you've not already done so). Mind you,

this is not a prediction that may come true in 200 years. We're talking about up to 1.5 feet of sea level rise by 2050. More than enough to change life as we know it here in Humboldt, and a virtual certainty. And what, given this well documented and clearly delineated problem, is our Board of Supervisors busy doing?

Recently, they've been trying to allow their cronies to erect electronic billboards throughout the county, attempting to emblazon "In God We Trust" in their chambers, and dithering on the General Plan until all their developer friends and deep pocket supporters are satisfied. In other words: nothing. Not to worry though. At least on a national scale, we have more mature and rational actors. OK. No. We don't. Just kidding.

Thanks to the Citizen's United Republican take over of the US government this past week, we will soon have Senator Inhofe from Oklahoma chairing the Senate Environmental and Public Works Committee. Here's what Senator Inhofe has to say about climate change: as he interprets the Bible, his God will not allow climate change, and it is arrogant of us humans to think otherwise. ("... God's still up there. The arrogance of people to think that we, human beings, would be able to change what He is doing in the climate is to me outrageous.").

It sort of begs the question: "OK, then why should we try to change what He is doing with Ebola, or HIV, or, for that matter, illegal immigration?" But I digress. Also out of his mouth, when speaking on the Senate floor: "CO2 does not cause catastrophic disasters - actually it would be beneficial to

***"Crab", Continued on Pg 19***

**“Crab”, Continued From Pg 5**

disasters – actually it would be beneficial to our environment and our economy.”

He is the same Senator Inhofe who once compared the Environmental Protection Agency to the Gestapo. Sadly, while this turn of events has my attention, it barely registers with the electorate. A Bloomberg National Poll conducted in June of this year asked which of several options people thought were the most important issues facing the country right now. Unemployment and jobs: 28% said yes; Health care: 17%; climate change: 5%. We’re facing of the biggest economic, environmental, and public health disasters ever to threaten the US, and it hardly even registers locally or nationally. This would not be the case if leaders from both parties could rise above the din of their lobbyists and speak to the American people – about this one issue only – with one voice. “Hey America! We have a problem, and we need to fix it now. We Senators/Governors/Legislators/County Supervisors disagree amongst ourselves still about a whole bunch of things, but this is serious, this is real, this is a slow moving disaster that we need to face as one.” Sorry. I fell down a Fantasyland wormhole for a minute there. Clearly, such sensible unity is not going to happen. But hey, not to worry, tonight I’m going to eat crab!

Finally, let’s not forget about the Supreme Court. Those same tenured-for-life gentlemen who gave us Citizens United have just announced they will take another look at the Affordable Care Act. The question they agreed to hear has to do with the Constitutionality of the Federal subsidies that go towards helping millions of Americans buy health insurance. The challengers posit that said subsidies should only go to those states (like California) that established their own exchanges.

Most states led by Republicans chose to ignore exchanges and to not work to help their citizens to benefit from the new law.

To be clear: said subsidies come from the Federal Government, and come at no cost to the individual states. Without them, the states would not receive more money in other forms, and the residents of said states would not stand to gain a penny. Yet, for the sake of argument, or ignorance, or out of pure spite, there remain those among us who will do whatever it takes to allow some states to keep their populations suppressed, and powerless, and without access to meaningful healthcare. Even if in so doing they are damaging the economies of their own states. Though such craziness and meanness and hubris trouble me deeply: not to worry. I’ll get over it. Because tonight, you guessed it, I’m eating crab! And you should too!

**“Risks”, Continued From Pg. 7**

· When choosing not to pursue clarification of a symptom or complaint, document the rationale.

**Be aware of signs of drug abuse or misuse.**

- Set limits with patients; consider using a therapeutic pain medication agreement.
- Do not provide narcotic refills unless the patient comes in for re-assessment.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of the requests in light of the prescription provided.
- If you suspect substance abuse, carefully document details of the situation and discussions with the patient in the patient’s medical record.

**Monitor the patient’s non-compliance.**

- Enforce the pain management agreement, when indicated.
- Document the patient’s action or inaction that led to termination or discontinuation of pain medications and rationale for the decision.
- Contact your medical professional liability insurer’s risk management department for guidance relating to terminating a patient from the practice.

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**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.** Hospice of Humboldt is seeking an Executive Director to lead its home care services soon-to-be-completed Ida Emmerson in-patient facility. To learn more or apply, please visit [www.hospiceofhumboldt.org](http://www.hospiceofhumboldt.org)

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Members may run classified ads in *North Coast Physician* at no charge for the first six months for business-related ads and ½ price for personal ads (on space available basis).

## ACCEPTING PATIENTS

**AJ Eckert, DO** is now accepting patients for full spectrum osteopathic manipulative medicine (OMM). Tuesdays 8 am to 8 pm, with some evening and weekend appointments available. Call 707-362-5358 for an appointment. Visit [ajeckertdo.weebly.com](http://ajeckertdo.weebly.com) for details.

## PROPERTY FOR SALE/ RENT/ LEASE

**FOR LEASE:** Join our new professional medical facilities near Mad River Hospital. Build to suit in new Planned Unit Development. 1200 - 4000 sq. ft. spaces. Contact Mark , 707-616-4416 or e-mail: [Jones202@suddenlink.net](mailto:Jones202@suddenlink.net).

**MEDICAL OFFICE SPACE FOR SUBLEASE** in McKinleyville. 700 sq. ft., 2 treatment rooms and waiting area. \$300/Mo. inc. utilities. Contact: AJ Eckert, D.O. (707) 362-5358.

***E-Mail Address Updates? Allied Health Practitioner Updates? Find information published in the Directory that needs to be updated? Please let the Medical Society know so we can keep records as up-to-date as possible.***

## MISCELLANEOUS

**HAIKU-CARDS** featuring Stephen Kamelgarn, MD's artwork is now available at local gift shops - be on alert!  
[Haikucard@yahoo.com](mailto:Haikucard@yahoo.com)

**20ft REDWOOD TREE SLABS** for tables (Unfinished) , \$800. Can be split into 10ft. Contact Lee (707) 499-2805.

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1/2 Page	\$160.00	7.45" x 5.23"
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*DEADLINE: 15th day of the preceding month to be published*