

August 3, 2015

## TODAYS HEALTH FOR THE EMPOWERED WOMAN

### SECOND OPINION

Over the past month we have all read about the Midwest physician who made tens of millions of dollars treating patients with chemotherapy and radiation for diagnosis of various types of cancer that turned out to be fraudulent. As this goes to press his sentence has yet to be determined but most likely will be life in prison. There are so many things disturbing about this story that I don't even know where to begin. The Hippocratic oath (paraphrasing here) dictates "I will not cut for stone" roughly translating that surgery or treatment in the absence of disease is a severe violation. It is unimaginable that a board certified physician would purposefully lie about the horror of a cancer diagnosis (no, not a misdiagnosis but a lie). A diagnosis of cancer immediately makes the patient want to compile a "bucket list", go into depression over the horror of treatment and death if treatment should fail and the severe impact emotionally and financially upon family. Chemotherapy is fabulously expensive to both the patient and insurance companies and the side effects are well known: hair loss, anemia, teeth loss, multiple organ system failures and sometimes sudden death. Radiation treatment is known for both short term and long term side effects including radiation sickness-vomiting, anemia and local burn and many years later potential organ injury from adhesions and even rare cancers provoked by the radiation itself. In the presence of a true cancer these modalities have an excellent cure rate and the side effects most patients are willing to endure for a chance at a cure that will prolong life and improve the quality of life. Now back to this physician: he purposefully lied in order to have a larger bank account, more cars, a yacht, etc. He apparently was without remorse that his patients were suffering the tortures of hell physically, emotionally, and financially. But there is so much more wrong here. Others had to be complicit in the deceit. Specialists in chemotherapy require their own review of pathology before commencing therapy—did they? Radiation oncologists require proof of the location and type of cancer before beginning therapy—did they? And what of Medicaid, Medicare, and the Insurance Companies? How could it be that no red flags were raised when hundreds of millions of dollars were billed under the name of one physician? When I was in active practice, an "i" not dotted or a "t" not crossed on a claim provoked fear that a government minion would come knocking at the door in the dead of night and drag you away for fraud. The moral of the story, here, when confronted with any diagnosis that requires extended, costly, and complicated treatment is GET A SECOND OPINION! No reputable physician is insulted by a request for a second opinion—in fact most welcome it as a confirmation of their own diagnosis. If your physician balks at this request, run, not walk out of his office. Hundreds of thousands of physicians are working long hard hours to treat their patients with up to date modalities in an environment of caring and empathy. The few morally depraved ones that "cut for stone" ultimately lose their licenses, go to prison for fraud and eventually will have to answer to an even higher authority. This story made we weep for the profession that I love but I took solace in knowing that it was a rare event. In my capacities on the Board for Medicine and the Office of Professional Medical Conduct, I assure you that my antennae are always up and that I find no sympathy for these charlatans.