

# *Your Taxes at Work*

*by Frederick Wickert*

I had been told I needed a quadruple heart bypass. I was admitted to the hospital in Albany medical center to prepare for it. I had been taking Plavix for a year and as it is a blood thinner it was necessary to wait five days to get it out of my system before the surgery.

I was placed in a room with another man. I was asked if I wanted TV. I was told the TV and phone, were going to cost me \$8.00 per day. I told them I didn't need TV. It was not worth the price to me. I did want the phone to communicate with the outside world. That was only four dollars and change per day.

The other man in the room had a number of visitors from his family. When the nurses came into the room he always demanded his pain pill. They always explained to them they could only give him what the doctor prescribed. He was never satisfied. He always complained, saying that he had three bullets in his leg and that he was in pain.

When the man left his bed to go to the bathroom, I looked for evidence of the bullets in his leg. There was no evidence of it. He did not limp and he had no open wounds on either leg. He had a small bandage on his chest and his left arm was in a sling.

The man was somewhat abusive towards the nurses, always giving them a hard time about his pain pills. In one situation, he implied the nurse had not given him a pill when she had. He tried to convince her that she had missed it and should give him another. She wasn't going for it. He never used foul language to their faces and always boasted to them that he treated them with respect because he had sisters. As soon as they began to walk away to leave the room he let loose with a string of obscenities, behind their backs and did it loudly enough they could not help hearing it. I felt sorry for them.

The nurses always handled it with dignity and courtesy, and never allowed the man to get under their skin. I doubt very much that I could have controlled myself half as well as the nurses. These nurses were complete professionals and knew how to deal with the patients.

The man got to see a doctor and convinced the doctor that he needed greater pain relief. The doctor ordered that after taking his pain pill, which he received every four hours, if he was still in pain an hour after the pain pill he could have a shot of morphine. He always demanded the morphine. He often attempted to get the nurses to give him the morphine shot instead of the pill, saying the pills did no good.

It didn't take me long to figure out that this guy was a drug addict and was just trying to get more drugs. When his family and friends were visiting, he never exhibited his nastiness towards the nurses, nor did he demand more pain relief.

One morning, a nurse came in the room. She went to the other man first and took his blood pressure and gave him his medication. She then came over to my side to give me my medication and take my blood pressure. The other man in the room began shouting for the nurse. He demanded a shot of morphine immediately. The nurse explained she had just given him his pill and could not give him anything else for an hour. Those were the doctor's orders. He then threatened her, which she ignored.

The man had swallowed the pill less than two minutes before. It did not have time to even reach his stomach yet. How could it possibly work without allowing it enough time to do so?

As soon as the nurse left the room, the man called his wife. He demanded that she call the hospital administration and tell them the nurses refused to give him anything for his pain. He told her to tell the administration that he wanted to file a formal complaint against the nurse.

As soon as I could, I left the room and went in the hallway in search of the nursing supervisor. I told him what had happened and told him the nurse did nothing wrong. I told him I was willing to sign a sworn statement and testify if need be, in her defense. The nursing supervisor smiled, thanked me for coming

forward, but assured me the nurse was not going to be in any trouble at all. My statement or testimony was not needed. He said they knew the guy and were used to him, and they all knew just what he was. I was relieved to hear that. I was assured that they often had to deal with much worse than he.

The very next day the man was discharged from the hospital and sent home. I had visitors the morning he was being discharged. I was telling them about the cost of the TV and the phone. The man spoke up and told me I didn't have to pay for those and that he never did. He said that he had been there three times before. Each time they sent him a bill for it. He said he just sent a letter to Medicaid with the bill and they took care of it.

Those are our tax dollars at work. Medicaid paying for drugs for addicts, paying their hospital bills, including the fee for phone and television. Thought you would like to know.