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## “Strong Medicine for America”

The ads were as plentiful and as welcome as new ties on Fathers’ Day. From the *Wall Street Journal* to *USA Today*, the ads proclaimed, “STRONG MEDICINE FOR AMERICA.” I showed my wife and asked random patients, “Tell me what this tagline means to you.”

“Must mean cancer” or “Is it an ad for alternative medicine, maybe a steroid?”

And how about that logo: “The torch’s guiding light embodies honor, valor, and victory.” I began to think I was reading a recruitment ad for the Marines.

OK, call me a curmudgeon, but the launch of the new AAFP brand seems a lot like the Future of Family Medicine (FFM) project, the New Model, and recent efforts promoting a Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH): slick Madison Avenue types, who for millions of dollars are repackaging our specialty to be an appealing flavor of the day. I was happy with carrying on a tradition of comprehensive care, continuity, and compassion.

I am not a Luddite. We are implementing an EHR and I give my patients my cell phone number and e-mail address. Heck, I have even encouraged our clinical leaders to review the National Committee for Quality Assurance—PCMH criteria and see how we score. Like almost all of you, we rely heavily on clinical income to balance our budget. We worry about the influence of big insurers, and we truly believe family medicine is the answer to caring for the uninsured. We want a rational health care system.

But I cringe when I see our specialty society focusing more attention on taglines than teaching, and promoting advocacy more than activism. It all brings to mind another ad campaign: “Where’s the beef?”

I decry our misguided reliance on branding, business, and balderdash. Stop telling me how an EHR will cure a broken health system, when most products lack even rudimentary quality improvement tools. Cease spending my dues on “key decision makers” who read *Forbes*, and start spending more on recruiting high quality US applicants to our residencies. Bring us better reimbursement for counseling a pregnant teen or coordinating care of a depressed elder with diabetes.

I don’t want a logo that draws from Greek mythology, but one that reflects our dreams for the future. Instead of an army of marketers, how about a little care for those 47 million uninsured Americans? Don’t sell America the snake oil of strong medicine, when what we really need is the resiliency and resourcefulness of the next generation of family physicians.

**PS:** What do you think?

Write me at [jfp@fammed.uc.edu](mailto:jfp@fammed.uc.edu)



Jeff Susman, MD, Editor-in-Chief