



**John Hickner, MD, MSc**  
Editor-in-Chief

## Postelection culture clash?

**I**t was the night after the election. I was trying to recruit Steve, a stalwart rural family physician, to join the Cleveland Clinic Department of Family Medicine. We met for dinner at the entrance to the Gamekeeper's Tavern, and the culture clash was evident at the door. He apologized for coming in his work clothes—brown scrubs top and blue jeans—and I apologized for being in mine, a suit and tie.

We couldn't help discussing the election results, and our views were 180 degrees apart. I am delighted that we do not have to start over with health care reform. Steve, who has been a private practitioner for 22 years and is fiercely independent, is highly wary of government intervention and "Obamacare."

There's no chance of recruiting him, I thought to myself.

That is, until we started talking about patient care. I related my experience as a rural family physician. He recited the vision and mission statements he had written for his practice, which sounded exactly like ours. We both ordered a glass of the Great Lakes Brewing Company Christmas ale. I took that as a good sign.

During dinner, Steve received 3 calls related to patient care, including one from a priest who had recently seen one of his elderly patients. He chatted easily with the priest and his patients. You could tell there was a mutual bond and that Steve is one terrific family physician.

**Despite our differences, we're equally committed to providing the best possible patient care.**

I reminded Steve that the US health care system is getting way too expensive and that we need to deliver better value. He agreed. I told him our facility is eliminating unnecessary testing and treatments and coordinating patient care and is committed to providing high-quality health care no matter who is in the White House. Steve said he shared that commitment and told me about his vision: To create a family medicine group in his small town in which each FP has expertise in a different area, like geriatrics, sports medicine, and dermatology, so patients can get 90% of the care they need right on site. That's a vision I'd buy into any day.

When we parted that night, Steve and I were still far apart in our views of health care reform, and he still wasn't sure whether he could tolerate all the rules and regulations that he would face if he were to work in a large organization. But despite our differences in both politics and practice settings, we found ourselves equally committed to providing patients with the best possible care as we face a changing health care system in the years ahead.

Happy holidays!

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