

Heard Any Good Ones Lately?

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I'd like to begin with a short quiz: What do jokes and medical articles have in common?

- They both get misquoted a lot.
- Everybody wants to write one.
- You can never remember one when you need to.
- All of the above.

(The correct answer is d.)

As we all know, doctors love a good joke. In fact, after bashing each other at Grand Rounds, telling jokes is a favorite pastime for most physicians. And, while much of the humor is in the "telling" of the tale, many jokes do translate to the printed page. Here are some of my favorite medical jokes.

A nurse called a resident at 3:00 AM. "Come quick," she said. "Your patient, Mrs Parks, just swallowed a thermometer."

The resident hung up the phone and put on his jacket, but before he could get out the door the nurse called back.

"Never mind," she said. "I found another one."

After six months of therapy, a psychiatrist was making excellent progress with a patient who had a multiple personality disorder. Since things were going so well, he decided to submit a bill for his services. Two weeks after he submitted the bill, the following letter arrived in the mail:

Dear Dr Pierce:

As you will undoubtedly recall, Myra was the one responsible for initiating these sessions. She also did most of the talking during the past few months. Since we don't know where she is any more than you do, we have no intention of paying this bill.

Sincerely,

Beth, Laura, Pat & John

How many attendings does it take to change a light bulb?

None—that's what medical students are for.

How many medical students does it take to change a light bulb?

Three—one to hold the bulb, one to read the manual, and one to call the attending when it won't come out.

A woman went to her doctor with a number of vague complaints. After examining the patient, the doctor said, "I'm not sure what this is, but it looks like you either have the flu or you're pregnant."

"Oh," the woman said. "Then I must be pregnant cause I don't know anyone who could have given me the flu."

A young couple got married after an old-fashioned courtship that did not include any serious petting. When they got to their hotel room, the groom took the lead and began to get undressed. After he took off his shoes and socks, his bride looked at his feet and said, "What's wrong with your toes, they're all gnarled and twisted?"

"Oh, that," he said. "When I was a boy, I had a case of tolio."

"Don't you mean polio?" she said.

"No," he answered. "It's like polio, but it involves your toes."

The man continued to get undressed and pretty soon took off his shirt and pants. His wife looked at his legs and said, "What happened to your knees, they're all scarred and swollen?"

"Oh, that," he said. "When I was a teenager, I had a case of kneasles."

"Don't you mean measles?" she said.

"No," he answered. "It's like measles, but it involves your knees."

A few moments later, the man stood before his wife completely naked. She looked at her husband and said, "I see, you must have had a case of smallcox too."

"I don't like the way your husband looks," the doctor told Mrs Barnes.

"Neither do I," said the woman, "but he's good with the kids."

A malpractice lawyer, an HMO administrator, and a Medicare auditor jump off the Empire State Building at the same time. Which one hits the ground first?

Who cares?

* * *

A man who was having trouble with his sink called a plumber to his house. After the plumber examined the pipes, he leaned back and said, "I can fix the problem, but I want you to know that my fee is \$150 per half hour.

"\$150 a *half* hour!" said the startled man. "Why I'm a neurosurgeon, and I only get \$150 for a full hour."

"Hey, don't feel bad," the plumber said sympathetically. "When I was a neurosurgeon, I only made \$150 an hour myself."

* * *

A doctor made a brief house call to one of his patients. As he left the house, he told the man's wife, "There's nothing wrong with your husband. He just thinks he's sick."

A few days later, the doctor stopped by to see how his patient was doing.

"How's your husband today?" the doctor said.

"He's worse," said the wife. "Now he thinks he's dead."

* * *

After three years in analysis, a patient had her last therapy session with Sigmund Freud. On leaving the office, the patient turned to the celebrated doctor with a puzzled look on her face. Noting her expression, Freud said, "Do you have a question, my dear?"

"Why yes, Herr Freud, I do. After all these years in therapy, I'm still not sure what a phallus is."

Dr Freud escorted the woman back into his office, pulled down his trousers, and pointed between his legs. "This, my dear, is a phallus."

"Oh, I see," said the patient. "It's like a penis—only smaller."

* * *

A doctor finally got to his table after breaking away from a patient who sought his advice for a medical problem.

"Do you think I should send her a bill?" the doctor asked a lawyer who was sitting next to him.

"Why not?" the lawyer said. "You rendered professional services by giving advice."

"Thanks," the doctor said. "I think I'll do just that."

When the doctor went to his office the next day to send out the bill, he found a note from the lawyer. It read, "For legal services, \$50."

* * *

The CEO of a managed care company dies and goes to Heaven, where he meets St Peter at the Pearly Gates.

"I want to be admitted to heaven," the CEO demands. "I've lived a good life, and I've made health care more affordable."

"You can come in," St Peter answers. "But you're only authorized for two days."

* * *

When the nurse came to give Mrs Johnson her heart medication, the patient looked skeptically at the pills.

"Excuse me," the patient said, "but I was just reading about a woman who checked into a hospital for heart trouble and she ended up dying because the nurse gave her the wrong medicine."

The nurse smiled. "Rest easy, Mrs Johnson. When a patient comes in here with heart trouble, she *dies* of heart trouble."

* * *

"Occasionally, I experience a complete loss of memory," Tracy said to her psychiatrist. "What do you recommend?"

"I recommend you pay me in advance."

* * *

"You don't have any medical insurance?" the surgeon said to his patient.

"No, I don't."

"Okay, then here's what we'll do. Give me a thousand dollars up front, and you can pay off the rest at five hundred dollars a month for twenty months."

"Just like buying a new car," said the patient.

"Actually, a boat," said the doctor.

* * *

Mr Chase was having terrible headaches, so he called his doctor for an appointment.

"I can squeeze you in next week," the receptionist said.

"Next week? Lady, I could be dead by then."

"In that case," she said, "please have someone call and cancel the appointment."

ANECDOTES WANTED

Do you have an amusing anecdote about one of your experiences in medicine? It can involve anything from patient care to embarrassing moments in medical school. *The Journal of Family Practice* is sponsoring an anecdote contest to help get your comic morsels into print. Submit double-spaced entries of up to 250 words to Anecdote Contest, c/o Howard J. Bennett, MD, 2820 McKinley Place, NW, Washington, DC 20015. Submissions will be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

The contest runs through December 1996. Anecdotes that are accepted will appear in future issues of *JFP*. Submissions may be abridged or edited in accordance with *JFP* style. The top five entries will receive a free copy of the second edition of Dr Bennett's book, *The Best of Medical Humor*.