

yeahMEditorial January 2010

“Why Shop Here?”

It is the start of a new year. Besides resolutions unlikely to be remembered one month later, some of us have decisions to make about our personal health care and who will provide that to us.

When “shopping” for a doctor (now that your Christmas shopping is complete) , the first question to ask is “why switch”? I have always been an advocate of consistency, of going with a winner, someone who knows you well and has earned your trust. Chose a doctor based on reputation, including his education, experience, longevity in the community, likely desire to continue practicing for a reasonable future period. To others making that recommendation to you, ask “on what basis do you suggest that doctor?” Personality issues and bedside manner, and especially compatibility are all relevant. Logical reasoning, candor, consistency, and excellent technical skills (in the case of a surgical specialist) would also be near the top. You need to see the truthfulness in the doctor’s eyes and expressions; as well as his confidence tainted with a slight degree of cynicism. The latter means the doctor you are choosing is willing to admit not all problems can be solved (@ least perhaps not by him), and that the mysteries of health and disease will survive all of us. Good outcomes cannot be guaranteed, but the range of likely outcomes from diagnostic and therapeutic interventions can and should be discussed.

This leads specifically to several reasons I think you should “shop” here for your urologic care. In stating so, I readily admit we live in a geographic area of great specialists including in my discipline--and in no way does this self-promotion cast dispersions on any of my colleagues/competitors. You “control the wallet” and must decide from whom you are going to “buy”.

#1. I have a wonderful staff. I am proud of my coworkers and how well they run this practice in harmony with my philosophy of patient care. It is almost daily when a patient will tell me “Dr. Freedman, you have the best staff”. I also have longevity and loyalty from them—this suggests their comfort level working

here and with the manner in which I do “medical” business. My coworkers are intelligent, logical, articulate, responsive, respectful, and compassionate to you, the patient. By the way, to “roll the credits”, their names are: Karin (office manager), Shannon (front office manager), Chelsey (nurse/back office manager) and Marlene (assistant to Shannon and Karin).

#2. I esteem the health of you, my patients, over ‘the bottom line’. Although we as doctors should run our practices as businesses and we share great concern regarding financial de-valuation of our services by the government and third party payers (insurance companies)—and you should be concerned about this, too-- my decision-making is and always will be based on what is best for you and not what is best for my earnings in a particular week or month. Surgery is advised when I have reason to believe it is the best choice, but I will not force it upon you--and I will be the first to clearly state its limitations. [Note: surgical reimbursements are not what you’d expect; so there may be less monetary motivation than ever before for me to choose a surgical over a less aggressive approach.] You may leave this office without a prescription and without a date for testing or surgery; but that is fine if I am not sure these are necessary or I feel reassurance or giving you time to contemplate all your options is the most appropriate tactic. You will be honestly told whether “newer” technologies are really better than existing ones or perhaps fads; and why I might feel more comfortable with one surgical technique than another, personalized to your situation. I am perfectly comfortable de-bunking myths and half-truths within my specialty and medicine in general.

#3. I listen closely, when you talk. Notice how I take notes. Your medical record here is all electronic and readily transferable when needed. My “electronic” notes are detailed when appropriate and not boilerplate; this reflects the thought I put into each and every encounter. When you, I or another healthcare provider reviews my progress notes, not only will the decision/diagnosis be

understood, but the very reasons I came to this and not another conclusion will be apparent. My doubts will also be expressed.

#4. Review my educational experiences and training on this website. Whether or not you will be impressed, remember that all along the way in my career path, I have been tested and risen to the very top; and selected as one physician with great promise and aptitude. In other words, those before you, including great institutions, have done some of the pre-selection. This is far more meaningful than, let's say, a lay magazine's list of "The Best Doctors" in an area (how do you suppose those names get published?)

#5. If you do need surgery, I pride myself on being meticulous, and at one both careful and perseverant enough to get the job done. I operate quickly and efficiently. Significant blood loss and trauma to the tissues is avoided. Minimally invasive techniques and small incisions are done whenever possible. Surgical outcomes (by such measures as cancer cure, improvement of urological functions, and lack of complications) are comparable to "the best" including academic institutions. My "radar" is set to "sensitive" both in the operating room and as regards postoperative management. My reflexes in detecting anything slightly awry inside your body help me react to see and correct course. For example, it is not unusual for me to convince a patient, after hearing his/her telephone report of "feeling too poorly" to keep his or her appointment, to come in nonetheless-- only to discover a major health threat, such as a pulmonary embolus or sepsis (extensive bacterial infection). Such conditions could have been fatal if not readily detected.

#6. This practice, although always busy, is still small and personalized, with one solo doctor who knows his patients well. I am proud of the loyalty of my patients to me, and they are rewarded in kind. For the rare patient who chooses

to leave and seek specialty care elsewhere, there is another who “shopped elsewhere”--only to later come back.

Thank you and have a great 2010!

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