

Loose Talk Blamed for Rise In Medical Malpractice Suits

Surgeons Show Exhibit Here

BY ARTHUR J. SNIDER

Daily News Science Writer

An ailing patient walks into the doctor's office for an examination. The physician observes an unattractive scar on the abdomen.

"What blacksmith did that?" he asks facetiously.

Wheels begin to turn in the patient's head. He's convinced now the old operation was a failure and is the source of all his current ills.

He promptly files suit for malpractice against his former doctor.

* * *

LOOSE AND thoughtless talk by one doctor about the work of another is one of the chief reasons for the rising tide of lawsuits against doctors, according to an exhibit presented to the American College of Surgeons here this week.

The exhibit, entitled "Asking for a Suit," was presented by the committee on medical-legal problems of the American Medical Association.

* * *

IT CITED these additional reasons for suits:

- Interpreting a pregnancy as a "fibroid" and recommending an operation without taking a pregnancy test.
- Guaranteeing a 100 per cent cure.
- Performing an operation not expressly or impliedly authorized.
- Leaving a maternity patient unattended.
- Disputes over fees which lead to countersuits for negligence.

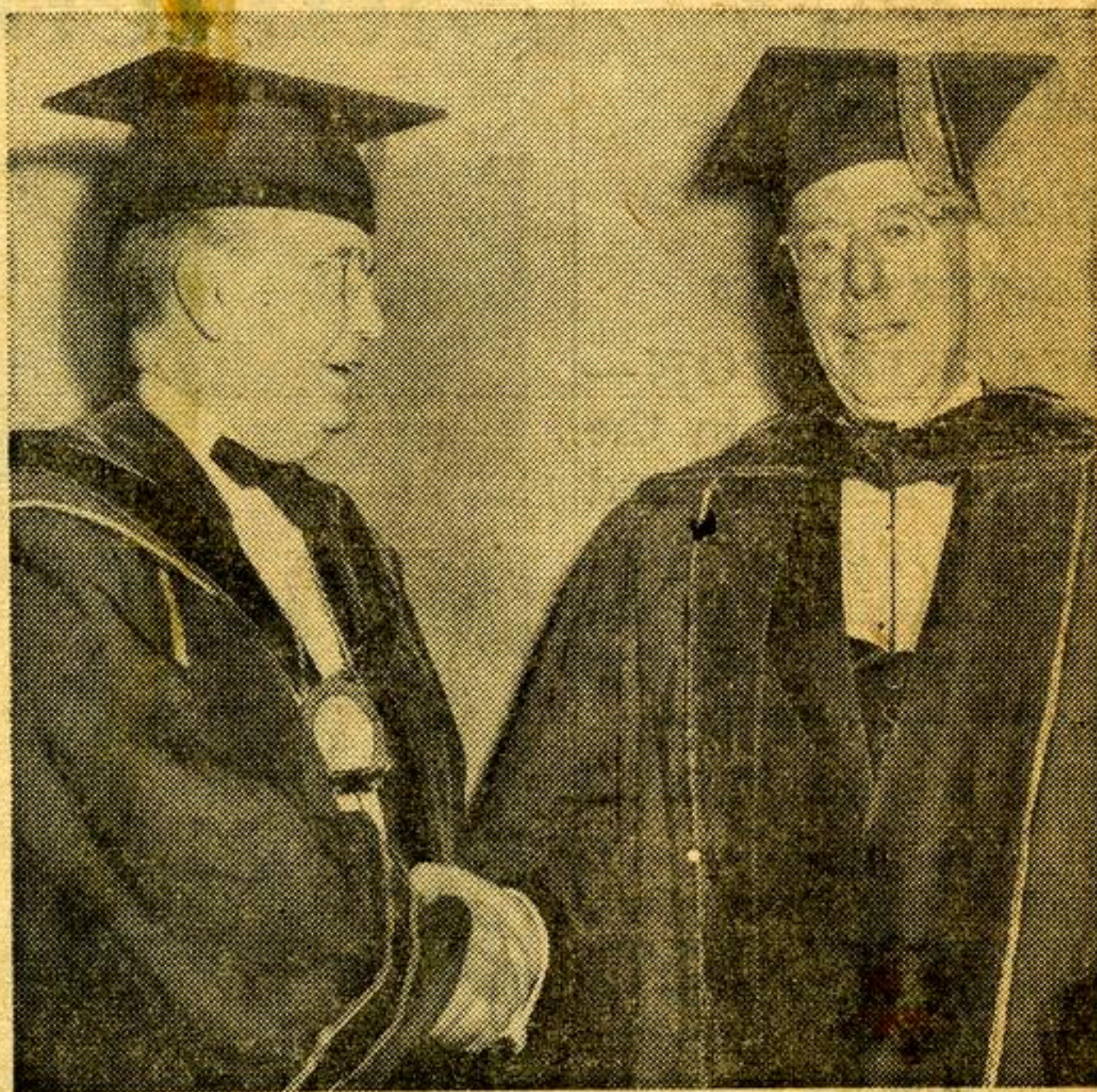
About 25 per cent of all claims arise out of surgery and about 7 per cent allege error in diagnosis or delay in making diagnosis.

* * *

AS THE American College ended its annual meeting Friday night, its new president rapped medical groups who give only "lip service" to the condemnation of evil practices in surgery.

Dr. Fred W. Rankin of Lexington, Ky., said he prefers to believe that the condemnation by the American Medical Association and other bodies of fee splitting, unnecessary surgery and overcharging has been sincere.

Yet, he pointed out, when an individual doctor expresses the same thing publicly, it is



TRADING JOBS as head of the American College of Surgeons, new president Dr. Fred W. Rankin of Lexington, Ky., and outgoing president Dr. Harold L. Foss (right) of Danville, Ill., shake hands at the installation ceremony in Chicago. Dr. Rankin is a past president of the American Medical Association.

he who is criticized, Dr. Rankin declared.

"Can it be," he added, "that the condemnation of evil practices is no more than lip service, no more than a concession to expediency?"

Dr. Rankin spoke in the Medinah Temple at cap-and-gown ceremonies inaugurating him as president and 1,179 new members as fellows of the American College.

* * *

THOSE FROM Chicago and suburbs included:

Drs. Paul A. Alfano, Orren D. Baab, Sidney Black, John J. Brosnan, George J. Bulkley, James S. Clarke, Jack P. Cowen, Cornell L. Dereng, Francis P. De Rosa.

Arthur E. Diggs, William S. Dye Jr., Frank F. Fiore, Michael C. Govostis, Anthony C. Guzauskas, William A. Hendricks, Burton C. Kilbourne, Francis A. Lagorio Jr.

Ralph T. Lidge, James H. McDonald, Robert S. Myers, William Patejdl, Laurance H. Rubenstein, Emanuel M. Skolnik, C. Otis Smith and Harry W. Southwick, all of Chicago.

Robert T. Fox and Stephen E. Reid, Evanston; John B. O'Donoghue Jr., Evergreen Park, and R. Brooks Hunt, Oak Park.