

American College of Surgeons



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Lexington, Kentucky

My dear Fred:

I have read the draft of your Presidential Address with the greatest pleasure. As I encountered several passages, I could feel the adrenalin being poured into my bloodstream. By the way, it is my impression that this is a Presidential Address -- that the Regents decided to substitute at least your Presidential Address for the Fellowship Address. Whether this will be continued, I do not know. This year, there will be two Presidential Addresses -- Foss' on Monday night and yours on Friday night.

Naturally I am pleased with your condemnation of those who attempt to gag men who speak out against unethical practices. But my great thrill comes from your philosophy of surgical practice, such as -- ". . . we do not have too many adequately trained specialists and that too frequently surgery is inexpectly and incompetently done by men with too little training and experience . . . Minor surgery is major surgery when done by an unskilled hand (this is a jewel) . . . surgical operations . . . when you are the patient are very personal experiences."

Your statement upon the responsibility of hospitals is splendid. I don't know whether you know about the recent uproar in Indianapolis. St. Vincent's Hospital kicked three surgeons off the staff for unnecessary surgery (after a medical audit). Two of them were "commercial" surgeons with tremendous practices, and fee-splitters. None was a Fellow. We were asked to survey, and we got the Joint Commission to request us to survey all Indianapolis hospitals at the same time.

As the result of our survey, both St. Vincent's and Methodist Hospital were dropped to Provisional Approval; and the Conference Committee in Graduate Training in Surgery withdrew approval of surgical residencies in both these hospitals.

The President of the Board of Methodist Hospital, a member of the Board, and the Administrator came to Chicago to see me. They were fine people. I bore down on their responsibility; and the next day the Administrator telephoned me to express appreciation for educating his Board to their responsibility. They will clean up the mess; of that I am sure.

How right you are about the importance of the humanities in medicine. The confidence of the patient in his doctor is lacking unless it embrace the doctor both as a friend and a trusted advisor. Patients of my grandfather and my father came to them for advice upon how to vote in the next election, when