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Sham Peer Review

Dr. Lawrence Huntoon's article, "The Psychology of Sham Peer Review,"¹ is outstanding. The description of the state of mind of the animalistic wolf pack is accurate. Here, the wolf pack consists of hospital administrators and physician fellow travelers. The event is a power trip.

What drives the leader of the wolf pack is important. The intended victim typically stands out from the herd of physicians. Being distinguished or unique makes the physician suspect.

Perhaps the target physician has been publicly critical. Perhaps he refused to surrender his patients to the administration's hospitalists. Perhaps he wrote letters to administrators or regulators about quality deficiencies in the "health system." Perhaps he uses medications or treatments that the herd does not favor.

In my circumstance,² I hosted a radio show that was not particularly favorable to an HMO. I refused several generous offers to allow the administration's hospitalists to assume care of my patients requiring hospitalization. I wrote a letter critical of some of the hospital's policies. I developed, patented, and marketed a potent antioxidant health supplement.

I was deluded by the thought that free speech and thought are still permitted in America.

Dr. Huntoon's article accurately describes the typical stages of the psychology of the target-physician. Shock and awe is followed by denial/disbelief, and isolation from peers. The false sense that truth matters and due process will occur is rapidly dissipated. Fear, followed by "fight-or-flight," is accompanied by depression and despair. On the other side of the "ditch of despair" is rage over the revelation that the "facts and truth are irrelevant" in sham peer review. The fix is in.

I strongly suggest that this rage can be converted into action. For example, I have

sued the perpetrating HMO for damages. I urge readers to truly immerse themselves in the understanding that sham peer review is an issue they must become knowledgeable and passionate about.

After all, you might be next.

William K. Summers, M.D.
Albuquerque, N.M.

I salute Dr. Huntoon for his crusade against sham peer review,¹ a very complex malignancy planted, truly, in the hearts of evil, but often brilliant people, with seemingly unlimited resources, who are also experts in the art of "spin," and are well versed in shaping and manipulating public opinion.

It is so crucially important for our colleagues to understand the nature of the beast, and how the beast destroys reputations and practices, and like much government propaganda, is 100 percent dependent on blind trust and ignorance and deception. If our "peers" truly understand it, sham peer review cannot exist, so we are fortunate that the antidote to the poison is simply education and awareness, and nothing more.

My best advice to physicians is that, if you hear rumors that a certain "peer" is accused of doing things which seem out of character, it may be a well-engineered false rumor. You are morally obligated to investigate for yourself, rather than being one of the trusting sheep. The most productive course is probably to follow the money.

Please support Dr. Huntoon in his crusade against deception and ignorance!

John R. Minarcik, M.D.
Lake Bluff, Ill.

¹ Huntoon LR. Psychology of sham peer review. *J Am Phys Surg* 2007;12:3-4.

² Summers WK. Sham peer review: a psychiatrist's experience and analysis. *J Am Phys Surg* 2005;10:118-119.