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# Correspondence

## The Perils of 'Guidelines'

Thank you for the publication of Dr. Amerling's superb opinion piece calling on all practicing physicians to save our profession.<sup>1</sup> He is 100% correct that we are being forced to move away from our ancient roots. In the Oath of Maimonides we are called upon to vow and say, "May the love for my art actuate me at all time; may neither avarice nor miserliness ... engage my mind."<sup>2</sup> Yet government regulators, insurance companies, AMA, our national specialty organizations, and the boards that certify us have lost their memory of this oath. In ancient Greece, Hippocrates said, "Whatsoever house I may enter, my visit shall be for the convenience and advantage of the patient."<sup>3</sup> In 1964 Louis Lasagna, academic dean of the School of Medicine at Tufts University, created the modern version of the Hippocratic Oath that most schools use today. In it, we swear to "apply, for the benefit of the sick, all measures which are required..."<sup>4</sup>—not for the benefit of government, the federal budget, or ACO.

Dr. Charles Lockwood's discussion on the "Industrialization of Medicine"<sup>5</sup> and Dr. Allan Jacobs's "Is There a Happy Medium?"<sup>6</sup> articulate how physicians have lost their ability and autonomy to individualize care in their patient's best interest.

Dr. Amerling gives us a wonderful analysis pertaining to his field of nephrology. In obstetrics, a striking example is the spreading governmental oversight and hospital regulations preventing scheduled repeat Caesarean delivery prior to the completed 39th week. The "39-Week Rule," which mandates that physicians may not induce a patient or schedule a C-section (with a few exceptions) is based upon one major study by Tita et al., which inappropriately excludes more than 8.5% of patients from the analysis.<sup>7</sup>

Lockwood<sup>8</sup> and I,<sup>9</sup> among others, have criticized this rule. Large studies have shown that more than 10% of patients awaiting the magic 39th week go into labor the week before.<sup>10</sup> Yet with the industrialization rules and the bureaucratic oversight—by governmental bodies, the March of Dimes, the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Choosing Wisely, and even the organization

supposedly representing practicing obstetricians (the American Congress of Obstetrics and Gynecology) have created an environment where few exceptions can be made to the 39-Week Rule. At our institution, patients scheduled for Caesarean delivery regularly go into labor, causing logistical nightmares and putting those patients at increased risk for morbidity and mortality. Here in Los Angeles, I have personal knowledge of six babies who have died or are permanently neurologically impaired as a direct result of the Rule.

I applaud AAPS and Dr. Amerling for advocating that our colleagues fight against the industrialization and bureaucratization of our profession.

**Howard C. Mandel, M.D., F.A.C.O.G.**

Los Angeles, Calif.

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