

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dr. Wolff is a board-certified family physician in private practice in Cornelius, North Carolina. He finished his family practice residency in 1997. He has graciously consented to share stories from the trenches of primary care. While his practice diary is taken from actual patient encounters, the reader should be aware that some medication references may represent off-label uses.

We at the *Companion* are certain that these vignettes will inform, entertain, challenge, and stimulate our readers in their effort to address behavioral issues in the everyday practice of medicine.

Sex, Drugs, and Rock and Roll or Banker's Little Helper

Christian G. Wolff, M.D.

Monday

Mrs. H is one of my favorite patients, so you can imagine I was taken aback when this pleasant 72-year-old woman greeted me by saying, "I have a bone to pick with you, son!" Turns out, Mr. H had been to see me a few weeks back requesting sildenafil, and since then Mrs. H's previously restful evenings have been, shall we say, *disturbed*.

This is not the first time that a little organ rejuvenation has led to problems for the recipients. In fact, I'm aware of another elderly couple for whom it was the trigger for a separation. It makes you wonder if there are times that you should just let sleeping dogs lie, if you know what I mean.

Tuesday

PT is a 17-year-old teenager here for an office visit with his Dad. One of PT's pals from school was hospitalized for alcohol intoxication over the weekend, and the incident has local parents buzzing. We had a good talk about the dangers of binge drinking, and though it was clear that PT would have preferred to be somewhere else, he did appear to engage in frank conversation and seemed thoughtful in his replies.

I've known PT and his family since he was 10 years old, and I'm sure that that continuity had a role in the impact of our conversation. I'm appreciating those *Marcus Welby, M.D.*, moments as I mature in my career, let me tell you.

Wednesday

Those of you who read my last missive know that one of my partners took his own life a few months ago. Our practice is just beginning to recover from the emotional stresses of that event, though nary a day goes by when a former patient of his fails to share their grief with me in the examination room. Today, as I counseled a teen about the warts on his hands, his mother began weeping. The waves of that event will continue to ripple for months, I'm sure.

Thursday

And, along that subject line, the whole topic of suicide is difficult these days. BF is a 41-year-old former patient of my deceased partner whose husband hung himself in their garage last weekend. His wife and 2 toddlers found him as they opened the garage door when returning from an outing to the swimming pool. How do you explain something like that to a toddler? I sure don't know. I wish there was a pill I could prescribe for those things, but I suppose it is not that easy, is it? Luckily, I have a number of counselors with whom I work that actually do a decent job at finding coherent things to say in these instances.

Friday

Fifty-two-year-old CI has a problem. This dowdy corporate banker by day is the lead singer in a Rolling Stones tribute band on weekends. That's not his problem; that, actually, is very entertaining. (You have to know the fellow—the only way it could be more amusing was if he were in a KISS tribute band . . . but I digress.) Lately, his gigs have been getting bigger, and he's developed a little stage fright. That has been compounded by the fact that he's been booked to play for his coworkers at a little "mergers and acquisitions soiree."

After I finished giggling (internally, of course), I suggested a touch of atenolol prior to performing. I thought a load of benzodiazepines might be more contextually appropriate, but perhaps CI shouldn't be too disinhibited. "Mother's" little helper, indeed. ♦