

The Rockford File

Split Personality United Again



Phyllis Gordon, Rockford

I must confess that I started CHIP reluctantly, and that I have been pretty grumpy about the whole thing.

Vegetarian

I have always looked down on vegetarianism. I have considered being a vegetarian as an “entry drug” for weirdness. If you become a vegetarian, who knows what may follow? Anything from reflexology to the Branch Davidians! A frightening prospect for anyone.

Plus, have you ever seen a robust-looking vegetarian? Of course not. They all look pale and washed-out (no doubt) from contemplating their next plate of tofu and Boca Burgers.

Preparing for CHIP

You can certainly understand my dilemma. My preparation for CHIP could be compared to entering a cloistered order of nuns. I went to my favorite diner to explain why they would see me no more. (I didn’t want them to think I was displeased with Jan’s famous cooking, now just a memory.) They all came out of the kitchen to say good-bye and to wish me well. You’d think I was headed off to Zimbabwe or something.

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Starting CHIP

Finally, the moment came when we had to start CHIP. As I handed over my money, I knew that all was lost. My friend had paid right away, but I didn’t pay until the first meeting, hoping that they would kick me out. I told Carol Ritzman, the CHIP

nurse, that it was the end of life, as I knew it.

Doing CHIP

To my intense relief, the people seemed rather ordinary, perhaps keeping their zealotry under wraps. I remember attending one of the CHIP alumni meetings with great suspicion leaving my coat by the door for a fast get-away. I knew I was not going to drink that Kool-Aid. To my surprise, I did manage to survive the classes and follow the program. I discovered that the outside world is very curious about CHIP. All of my friends were asking me about it. That’s when I began to develop a split personality—grumpy and whining in class, and then telling the world how great it was!

Now that it’s over, I must admit that I’m very

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pleased with the results. I had been hospitalized last fall for some blood transfusions. This was

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followed by several tests that revealed nothing. I was still very weak and fatigued. I had to discontinue my tutoring/teaching, which I enjoy. However, Dr. Greenlaw, the CHIP medical

director, urged me to start CHIP and to regain my health. I was unenthusiastic, to say the least. But, you can't argue with results. My cholesterol went from 196 to 155 m%. My LDL dropped from 126 to 98 mg% and my triglycerides came down to 94 points. All in four weeks! My blood pressure went from 150/90 to 122/70 like that

“Diehling is Healing!”

found in teenagers! And I lost ten pounds without ever being hungry. My friend is pleased, too. She lost nine pounds and her triglycerides dropped 200 points. We both

plan to continue on this path. Now when people ask me about CHIP, I can speak with one personality again. I'm continuing to lose weight and I'm back at my water exercise class. I must conclude that “Diehling is Healing.”



The Making of a Surgeon

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“Their own patients have become the enemy,” writes a third, because they “are the one thing that stands between you and a few hours of sleep.”

Legal Action

Agrawal's organization is supporting the Patient Physician Safety Protection Act 2001 introduced last November by Representative John Conyers of Michigan. Its key provisions, modeled on New York state's regulations, include a 80-hour work week and 24-hour work shift limit.

Most doctors, however, resist such interference. Dr. Charlie Binkley, a senior surgery resident at the University of Michigan, agrees that something needs to be done but believes that “doctors should be bound by their conscience, not by the government.”

The U.S. controls the hours of pilots and truck drivers. But, until such a system is in place for doctors, patients are on their own. If you are worried about the people treating you or your loved ones, you should feel free to ask how many hours of sleep they've had and if more-rested staffers are available. Physicians, for their part, have to give up their pose of infallibility and get the rest they need.

—Dr. Gupta is a neurosurgeon and CNN medical correspondent. This article was published in Time, March 11, 2002. Used with permission.