

# The Press & Dakotan

THE DAKOTAS' OLDEST NEWSPAPER | FOUNDED 1861

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## OPINION OTHER VIEWS

# Cancer Patients: Harrowing Choice

**THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS (April 7):** For too many cancer patients in our broken system, treatment comes down to a harrowing choice: death or financial ruin.

Prescription drug costs for new cancer treatments are soaring at unsustainable rates, as *Dallas Morning News* reporter Jim Landers chronicled in a recent report. By 2020, the cost of specialty drugs for cancer and other diseases could reach \$400 billion a year, by some estimates, about \$100 billion more than the entire prescription drug industry today. New cancer drugs today can cost from several hundred to thousands of dollars monthly, price tags that even people with insurance often can't afford.

What good is a cancer drug if most Americans can't afford it? Making matters worse is that the same drugs in Europe or Canada often cost a fraction of that price. As Clifford Hudis, a leading cancer expert, told *The Dallas Morning News*: "We don't have a functioning marketplace as regards cancer and drugs. One result is, everybody in this space is victimized."

Without serious reform, this problem and its impact on aging Americans is going to get dramatically worse. Cancer is the second-leading cause of death, behind only heart disease, and is heading rapidly toward the No. 1 spot. Worldwide, annual cancer cases are expected to rise over the next two decades from 14 million diagnoses to 22 million. This year, more than 1.8 million Americans will be diagnosed with cancer.

Drug companies say they need to recoup research investments, which can run more than \$1.5 billion for successful treatments. That may be true, but the system also lacks transparent price competition. Medicare, the federal health insurance program, is prohibited from negotiating with the pharmaceutical industry over prices. And while many hospitals receive discounts on cancer drugs under Medicare rules, they aren't required to share those discounts with patients. Also, it is illegal to import the same drug at a cheaper price from pharmacies overseas, although many people do it as a last resort.

Drug companies should expand special patient saving programs to reduce costs. Medicare rules should allow the government to negotiate better rates with drug companies. Cancer drugs also should be legally available from certified providers offshore. And, like most of the health care system, the cancer treatment infrastructure needs a dose of financial transparency.

There will always be a tipping point in modern medicine at which patients are priced out of lifesaving medications, but there's so much more we can do to swing the pendulum back toward the benefit of patients. More and more lives are depending on it.

## OUR LETTER POLICY

The **PRESS & DAKOTAN** invites its readers to write letters to the editor. We ask that a few simple guidelines be followed:

- Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.
- In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the **PRESS & DAKOTAN** will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.
- Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.
- Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email us at [kelly.hertz@yankton.net](mailto:kelly.hertz@yankton.net).

## IN HISTORY

### By The Associated Press

This is Thursday, April 9, the 99th day of 2015. There are 266 days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On April 9, 1865, Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendered his army to Union Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House in Virginia.

**On this date:** In 1413, the coronation of England's King Henry V took place in Westminster Abbey.

In 1682, French explorer Robert de La Salle claimed the Mississippi River Basin for France.

In 1913, the first game was played at Ebbets Field, the newly built home of the Brooklyn Dodgers, who lost to the Philadelphia Phillies, 1-0.

In 1914, the Tampico Incident took place as eight U.S. sailors were arrested by Mexican authorities for allegedly entering a restricted area and held for a short time before being released.

In 1939, singer Marian Anderson performed a concert at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. after being denied the use of Constitution Hall by the Daughters of the American Revolution.

In 1940, during World War II, Germany invaded Denmark and Norway.

In 1942, American and Philippine defenders on Bataan capitulated to Japanese forces; the surrender was followed by the notorious Bataan Death March.

In 1945, German pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 39, was executed by the Nazis at the Flossenburg concentration camp.

In 1959, NASA presented its first seven astronauts: Scott Carpenter, Gordon Cooper, John Glenn, Gus Grissom, Wally Schirra, Alan Shepard and Donald Slayton. Architect Frank Lloyd Wright, 91, died in Phoenix, Ariz.

In 1965, the newly built Astrodome in Houston featured its first baseball game, an exhibition between the Astros and the New York Yankees, with President Lyndon B. Johnson in attendance. (The Astros won, 2-1, in 12 innings.)

In 1983, the space shuttle Challenger ended its first mission with a safe landing at Edwards Air Force Base in California.

In 1996, in a dramatic shift of purse-string power, President Bill Clinton signed a line-item veto bill into law. (However, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the veto in 1998.)

**Ten years ago:** Britain's Prince Charles married longtime love Camilla Parker Bowles, who took the title Duchess of Cornwall. Tens of thousands of support-

ers of a militant Shiite cleric filled central Baghdad's streets, demanding that American soldiers go home. A day after the funeral for Pope John Paul II, cardinals began an intense period of silence and prayer before their conclave to choose the next pope. Feminist author Andrea Dworkin died in Washington, D.C. at age 58.

**Five years ago:** Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens announced his retirement. (His vacancy was filled by Elena Kagan.) Wisconsin forward Blake Geoffrion, the grandson of Hockey Hall of Famer Bernie "Boom Boom" Geoffrion, received the Hobey Baker Memorial Award as college hockey's top player. Meinhardt Raabe, who'd played the Munchkin coroner in "The Wizard of Oz," died in Orange Park, Florida, at age 94.

**One year ago:** A 16-year-old boy armed with two knives went on a rampage at Franklin Regional High School in Murrysville, Pennsylvania, stabbing 20 students and a security guard (all of whom survived). President Barack Obama and his wife, Michelle, visited Fort Hood, Texas, the scene of a shooting a week earlier in which three U.S. Army soldiers were killed by a fellow soldier who then took his own life.

**Today's Birthdays:** Playboy magazine founder Hugh Hefner is 89. Satirical songwriter and mathematician Tom Lehrer is 87. Naturalist Jim Fowler is 85. Actor Jean-Paul Belmondo is 82. Actress Michael Learned is 76. Country singer Margo Smith is 73. Country singer Hal Ketchum is 62. Actor Dennis Quaid is 61. Comedian Jimmy Tingle is 60. Country musician Dave Innis (Restless Heart) is 56. Actress-sports reporter Lisa Guerrero is 51. Actor Mark Pellegrino is 50. Actress-model Paulina Porizkova is 50. Actress Cynthia Nixon is 49. Rock singer Kevin Cadogan (Candlebox) is 46. Rock singer Gerard Way (My Chemical Romance) is 38. Actress Keshia Knight Pulliam is 36. Rock musician Albert Hammond Jr. (The Strokes) is 35. Actor Charlie Hunnam is 35. Actor Ryan Northcott is 35. Actor Arlen Escarpeta is 34. Actor Jay Baruchel is 33. Actress Leighton Meester is 29. Actor-singer Jesse McCartney is 28. Rhythm-and-blues singer Jazmine Sullivan is 28. Actress Kristen Stewart is 25. Actress Elle Fanning is 17. Actor Isaac Hempstead Wright is 16. Classical crossover singer Jackie Evancho is 15.

**Thought for Today:** "The ultimate test of a moral society is the kind of world that it leaves to its children." — Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945).

## FROM THE BIBLE

*Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of My hands. Isaiah 49:16. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Gear Wanted

**Fran Johnson, Yankton**

Citywide cleanup is fast approaching — a good time to clean out closets, garages or storage for unwanted sporting goods: Bikes, balls of any kind, golfing equipment, etc.

All sporting goods will often be transported to needy kids on the Indian reservation. All of this will be done by members of Legion Post 12 Yankton.

For free pickup, call Fran Johnson at 605-668-0705 or 760-5941.

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S&K



## Writer's Block

# Milestone Musings

BY JAMES L. VAN OSDEL

For the Press & Dakotan

Chalk this one up to the category of "musings of an older person," although I do not think of myself as an older person. But, going around the mulberry bush of reality, I often proudly and optimistically, with fingers crossed, tell younger friends that I will be "78 year after next."

Most older folks enjoy recalling major milestones in life.

After being initiated into the Order of Elks in February of 1963, regularly attended lodge meetings on the third floor of the 1912 Elks lodge home. After meetings, the members traipsed down the four flights of stairs to the lodge clubroom in the basement level of the lodge.

Drinks were 35 cents. And here I was, visiting with the scions of the lodge and the Yankton community. L. J. "Bud Gregory worked for years as a counterman at Wallbaum Drug. He was very popular across the state after chairing the 1948 Elks state convention in Yankton because he incorporated events in the convention that included activities for the ladies. "Make a date in 48" was spread across the state, including, I am told, the ceilings of some nefarious places of business in Deadwood where the 1947 Elks state convention was held. We report, you decide.

James L. "Jimmy" Lloyd, banker of great repute at American State Bank for many years, was the lodge treasurer. He also sat at the clubroom bar and visited with the "new recruit". But he was already familiar because he had handled financial arrangements at "the bank" for our Dad, grandfather, and myself when I cashed in (against his advice) savings from five years of my 4H livestock projects to buy my '49 Ford coupe in June of 1955.

Several years later, (1970) I was installed as an officer. Jimmy Lloyd was no longer physically able to attend meetings and the clubroom events that followed. But Bud Gregory remained at meetings and "social hour" to school me in how things were supposed to be done as an officer of the lodge and state association level.

Gregory's wife, Sally, had served as appointment secretary for a North Dakota farm boy and his band, the Hotsy Totsie Boys or



Jim VAN OSDEL

the Hawaiian Fruit Gum band, whoever the sponsor, when they played on WNAX radio. They learned the latest hits of the day on records they played at the drug store where Gregory worked. The ten cent drug store ham sandwiches Bud made for them helped them survive those lean years.

And so Lawrence Welk remembered Bud and Sally Gregory and maintained his Elks membership in Yankton for many years after he moved to the bright lights of television in California where, in his North Dakota accent, he advertised "Dotch" cars and trucks.

Gregory was acquainted with a great many of the "big bands" of the Thirties and Forties. In those days, it was not unusual for Yankton stores to remain open until 10 or 11 p.m. or until all patrons had gone home for the night. One evening Bud Gregory and his longtime employer, Carl Wallbaum enjoyed a sip of "medicinal" Scotch in

the back of the store, where they were relaxing to the strains of a new musical group on the radio.

"Hey, Bud," Wallbaum quipped. "Wake up the Western Union (telegrapher) girl and send a telegram to that band."

As Bud and his boss, Carl Wallbaum, enjoyed lunch the next day, the Western Union delivery person showed up and handed them a response to their message of the night before.

"Dear Sirs," the message read, "Thank you for your kind remarks in regard to our initial performance in the U.S. Sincerely, Guy Lombardo."

I guess maybe I really am an old geezer or maybe it is perhaps I do have somewhat of a privileged insight into the past as Kathy and I enjoy the dance music of Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians on PBS on Saturday nights, as well as reruns of the Lawrence Welk shows. And do I really see Bud and Sally sitting there in the front row waiting for Lawrence to acknowledge them? He really did that on one of his early TV shows from California when Bud and Sally visited the studio. And you know what? Bud loved big band music but he didn't even like to dance.

Lawrence Welk gave his friend, Bud Gregory, a set of cufflinks which resemble an accordion. I now wear them on special occasions. As our days become shorter, memories are invaluable.

# VA Reform: Another Obama 'Success Story'

BY MICHELLE MALKIN

Creators.com

Eight months ago, President Obama put on a grand show for the troops. Surrounded by new Secretary of Veterans Affairs Bob McDonald, assorted politicians, military leaders and a bevy of TV cameras, the commander in chief signed the "Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act." He's good at inking things.

Obama condemned the "inexcusable conduct" at VA hospitals across the country (and under his own watch).

He vowed to "do right by all who served under our proud flag." He promised America's veterans new "reform," "resources," "timely care" and an end to the disgraceful disability backlog.

The bill he signed, in case you'd forgotten, included \$10 billion in emergency funding to pay for veterans to go outside the chronically dysfunctional VA system if they are facing long wait times or live 40 miles or more from a VA facility, plus another \$6.3 billion to set up 27 new clinics and hire doctors, nurses and other medical staff.

So, how's it all working out? About as well as every other "success story" Obama has signed his name to: abysmally, ineffectually and incompletely.

Take Obama's hyped plan to expand health care access to those who live far from a VA facility. Obtuse federal bureaucrats interpreted "40 miles" in the narrowest way possible, applied an "as the crow flies" distance rule inconsistently, and excluded untold numbers of vets. It took more than a year – and concerted pressure from veterans groups and GOP lawmakers – for the administration to "clarify" its confused eligibility standards just two weeks ago.

What about "accountability"? Obama bragged last August that "we've already taken the first steps to change the way the VA does business. We've held people accountable for misconduct. ... We should have zero tolerance for that." Looks like the VA bosses in Shreveport, La., didn't get the memo. As Tori Richards of Watchdog.org reported last month, a mental health services worker who exposed use of a secret appoint-



Michelle MALKIN

ment waiting list there was ignored for a year. Instead of accountability for the wrongdoers, the VA employee who blew the whistle, Army vet Shea Wilkes, became the subject of a criminal investigation.

And how's that new facility construction campaign going? The VA's atrocious complex has been a problem for decades under both Democratic and Republican administrations. Nothing's changed under the era of hope and change.

Here in Colorado, the new Aurora VA hospital has become another in a long line of government spending cesspools. The \$600-million 184-bed facility is now estimated to cost at least \$1.7 billion after a reckless parade of design changes, cost overruns and mismanagement – and may not be ready until 2017. "Accountability"? Pffft. The head of the VA's Office of Acquisition, Logistics and Construction responsible for the waste

was allowed to resign with a full federal pension and retention of nearly \$60,000 in bonuses earned during the fiasco.