The United States lost the Vietnam War. However, Americans won the war in Soc Trang, as described in *Soc Trang: A Vietnamese Odyssey* (Rocky Mountain Writers Guild, Boulder, CO) by Carl E. Bartecchi, MD, of Pueblo, Colorado.

This book has a special meaning to members of the Henry Ford Hospital family who knew Dr. Bartecchi during his residency on the medical service here in the early 70s. It is not surprising that the heartwarming and successful story of Soc Trang resulted from the efforts of such a talented, caring physician as Dr. Bartecchi. Those who know Dr. Bartecchi will understand. His poignant experience in Soc Trang reflects his warm personality, a determined will, and diplomatic persistence. No matter what one’s personal convictions about the Vietnam War itself, Americans cannot help but be proud of the medical system and society that produced individuals such as Dr. Bartecchi and his medical colleagues. They made the odyssey of Soc Trang possible.

With hard work and natural leadership ability, Dr. Bartecchi and his medical group greatly improved the level of medical care in Soc Trang, a village in the Vietnamese delta country. Squalor and lack of proper sanitation, accompanied by primitive medical knowledge and deep-rooted deleterious living habits, led to a high level of malnutrition, intractable diarrhea, and festering skin infections. Dr. Bartecchi and his medical team had to combat not only these conditions but also the ingrained superstitions of the local population who were threatened by communist reprisals if they cooperated with the American medical effort. He and his medical corpsmen were able to overcome all these obstacles. Dr. Bartecchi describes how improved methods of cleanliness and sanitation, along with a few simple antibiotics and attention to wound care, greatly improved local health conditions. Not only was the health of Soc Trang improved, but Dr. Bartecchi and his team gained the respect and loyalty of the villagers and those in the surrounding countryside.

Working hand-in-hand with Dr. Bartecchi was another gifted individual, Mother Bruno, who had the foresight and courage to take advantage of what Dr. Bartecchi and his medical team brought to the local village. Together, they made order out of chaos, gave health instead of disease, and offered hope instead of despair. They expected no rewards other than the personal satisfaction of a job well done. Their rewards came from the happy faces of their patients, young and old, who were helped by their ministrations.

The established medical profession in Soc Trang, largely trained in the ways of the old French colonial system, was suspicious and felt threatened by new health methods, as well as by loss of income and authority over the people. But once the American medical efforts began to show results, even family members of the local medical establishment as well as the enemy came for medical help.

Dr. Bartecchi’s requests to the American people for medical supplies were channeled through World Medical Relief (Detroit, Michigan), nurtured by the energy and leadership of Mrs. Auberlin, its leader at the time. Here is still another example of the generosity of the American people in time of need. After a while, the supplies of soap, diapers, linens, and clothes that came via World Medical Relief became mountainous and were almost more than could be dispensed. The story of Soc Trang demonstrates how individuals respond to caring leaders such as Dr. Bartecchi who show a deep interest and concern for the people they serve.

Descriptions of local tribal customs, medical practices, and superstitions in rural Vietnam are fascinating to read about in Dr. Bartecchi’s account. Having personally experienced the Korean War with its bitter cold winters, I found the description of the heat, humidity, and constant flooding in the Vietnamese delta country to be a striking contrast. It is hard to know which is less desirable.

If the story of Soc Trang had been repeated in hundreds of villages throughout Vietnam, one wonders whether the outcome of the war would have been different. In guerilla warfare, the hearts and minds of the native population need to be won—what better way than by improved health standards and living conditions without any political strings attached.

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I have often thought about going back to Suwon South Korea (K-13) to see if there have been any lasting benefits of the relatively minor attempts that some of us made to improve the health and sanitation among the local Korean people. Dr. Bartecchi probably has similar thoughts about returning to Soc Trang. Was the health and outlook of those in Soc Trang permanently changed, or have they reverted to earlier levels of hopelessness and despair with regards to health matters? Probably so.
Most readers will be greatly moved by Soc Trang: A Vietnamese Odyssey. I was. The writing style carries a pervasive ring of truth and sincerity. For those who know Dr. Bartecchi, the book will have a special meaning.

Boy Frame, MD
Bone and Mineral Metabolism Division
Department of Internal Medicine
Henry Ford Hospital
Detroit, Michigan

Re: Abbs

The special article by Dr. Conrad Lam entitled “Re: Abbs” in the Vol. 30, No. 4, 1982 issue of the Journal prompted a great deal of positive response. Dr. Lam received many letters supporting his stand against the abuse of medical abbreviations. A sample representation of these letters is printed below. — Ed. Note.

Dear Dr. Lam:
I applaud the theme of your article “Re: Abbs” that appeared in a recent issue of the Henry Ford Hospital Medical Journal.

It reminded me of the time, years ago, when I was working at HFH (that’s acceptable, isn’t it?) with an intern who was overly fond of abbreviations. It became a sort of game to decipher these. But with one abbreviation, he had me stumped. His histories were replete with “o & o” this and “o & o” that. Finally I gave up and asked him for a translation. “Oh,” he replied, in a condescending tone, “That means on and off. You know, SOB o & o.”

I admired that fellow. Think of the energy he might save, over a lifetime, by omitting all those tiresome ns and ffs.

Yours cordially,

William S. Haubrich, MD
Head, Division of Gastroenterology, Scripps Clinic and Research Foundation
La Jolla, California

Dear Dr. Lam:
I was delighted to read your special article from the Henry Ford Hospital Medical Journal. I couldn’t agree more with the thrust of your comments. Abstracts are the worst offenders, because of the space which they occupy as the criterion for size, and because the authors use the abbreviation device to cram as much information into that space as possible. Perhaps that is forgivable; however, full scientific communications are the problem. Medical knowledge and science in general are becoming so sophisticated and complex there is an inevitable urge to abbreviate complicated concepts that are used routinely. Unfortunately, that which is routine for the initiated is an annoyance to the uninitiated in a particular area of knowledge. I, like you, am not sure what the answer is, except to insist that all symbols be defined at some point in the manuscript and to urge the least possible use of symbols.

Sincerely yours,

Dwight C. McGoon, MD
Editor, The Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery
Rochester, Minnesota

Dear Dr. Lam:
Just a quick note to let you know how much I enjoyed your recent editorial in the Henry Ford Hospital Medical Journal on Alphabet Soup. I haven’t laughed so hard in years, as the saying goes!

By the way, you might want to be on the lookout for my upcoming article, soon to be published in the Kathmandu Medical Society News, entitled: S I O - A Cure for the APS (Spell It Out - A Cure for the Acronymic Proliferative Syndrome).

Sincerely,

Douglas H. Smith, MD
Detroit, Michigan
Announcements

Upcoming Fall Meetings

Otorhinolaryngology Update for the Practicing Physician

Wednesday, September 14, 1983
Henry Ford Hospital
Detroit, Michigan

Sponsored by the Department of Otolaryngology of Henry Ford Hospital, this course will provide a survey of recent developments in the clinical fields of otorhinolaryngology.

Topics will include:
- Assessment and Management of Head and Neck Masses
- Acute Ear Disease
- Hearing Loss
- Epistaxis
- Early Identification of Hearing Loss
- Testing of the Pediatric Age Group
- Parotid Disease
- Chronic Ear Disease
- Upper Airway Management in the Pediatric Age Group
- Stuffy Nose
- Vertigo
- Brainstem-Evoked Response Testing

For further information, contact Dr. Bennie B. Gilmore, Jr., Department of Otolaryngology, Henry Ford Hospital (313) 876-3288, or the Office of Medical Education, Henry Ford Hospital, 2799 W Grand Blvd, Detroit, MI 48202 (313) 876-1464.

Prostaglandins: Pain, Protection, and Possibilities

Friday, September 16, 1983
Holiday Inn, Sprinkle Road
Kalamazoo, Michigan

This day-long seminar, sponsored by the Michigan Chapter of the American Medical Writers Association (AMWA), will give physicians an overview of the latest clinical research on prostaglandins by scientists from the Upjohn Company (Kalamazoo), Warner Lambert/Parke-Davis (Ann Arbor), and Wayne State University (Detroit).

Topics will include:
- “History and Overview of Prostaglandins,” Dr. K. M. Mann, The Upjohn Company
- “Nonsteroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs for Prostaglandin-Induced Diseases,” Dr. Thomas Petrick, Warner Lambert/Parke-Davis
- “Gastric Cytoprotection by Prostaglandins,” Dr. Andre Robert, The Upjohn Company
- “Prostacyclin, Prostacyclin-Stimulating Agents and Drugs Synergistic with Prostacyclin in Inhibition of Tumor Metastasis,” Dr. Kenneth Honn, Wayne State University

Cost (including lunch, coffee and doughnuts, all registration materials): $35, AMWA members; $50, non-members; $20, students and residents. Deadline for advance reservations is Monday, September 12, 1983.

For further information, contact Dr. Patricia L. Cornett, Scientific Publications Office, Henry Ford Hospital, 2799 W Grand Blvd, Detroit, MI 48202 (313) 876-2028.

Perspectives on Inflammatory Bowel Disease

Saturday, September 24, 1983
Somerset Inn
Troy, Michigan

Co-sponsored by the American College of Gastroenterology and the Michigan Chapter of the National Foundation for Ileitis and Colitis, this day-long course will survey recent advances in inflammatory bowel disease.

Aspects of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) to be discussed include the etiology, immunology, changing epidemiology, IBD in children, flexible endoscopy in diagnosis and management, new diagnostic approaches by the radiologist, recent advances in surgery, the use of sulfasalazine, a practical approach to nutritional support in IBD, as well as the differential diagnosis in Crohn's colitis, and cancer surveillance in ulcerative colitis.

CME Category I credit is offered.

Cost: $100 for practicing physicians, $25 for residents and others. Fee includes lunch, coffee breaks, and syllabus materials.

For further information, contact the Office of Medical Education, Henry Ford Hospital, 2799 W Grand Blvd, Detroit, MI 48202 (313) 876-3072.

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease in the Elderly

Thursday, October 13, 1983
Michigan Inn
Southfield, Michigan

For further information about this half-day seminar, contact Dr. Michael Eichenhorn, Pulmonary Disease, Henry Ford Hospital, 2799 W Grand Blvd, Detroit, MI (313) 876-2436.
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