

MERRY CHRISTMAS



The Pharmacist Activist

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“She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21

WISE MEN STILL SEEK HIM

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Appreciation

This issue marks the completion of the nineteenth year of publication of *The Pharmacist Activist*. The index for this Volume 19 (2024) is included. All issues in Volumes 1 through 19 are available on the website, www.pharmacistactivist.com.

I am very grateful to those who read this newsletter, and the many who provide thoughtful comments, experiences, and recommendations. I am fortunate in being able to voice opinions that can be highly critical because, in “retirement,” I am not beholden to an employer or pharmacy leaders, or at risk of losing my position. I understand that many pharmacists do not have that liberty, and can’t afford to risk losing their position or being vulnerable to criticism/discipline. After more than 200 issues of *The Pharmacist Activist*, I wish I could say that I have provided observations and recommendations that have contributed to positive actions and changes in our profession. However, this has not been my experience and, if anything, my comments have been ignored or rejected by pharmacy leaders. The responses I receive most often are from chain pharmacists who voice appreciation that I understand the chaos, errors, stress, and understaffing that characterize their workplace experience, and am willing to criticize their employers. As much as I deplore the circumstances that these pharmacists experience, their responses, and their need for a “voice” and help provide me with the motivation to continue challenging the situations that I consider devastating for our entire profession.

I wish to express my appreciation to Linda Corvari, my friend and former student, who is the founder and CEO of the pvalue group of companies (www.pvaluegroup.com) for the financial support she has provided for the publication of *The Pharmacist Activist*. This support makes it possible to continue to make this newsletter available free-of-charge via email to interested pharmacists, student pharmacists, and others.

Appreciation is also extended to Jeff Zajac for his very capable design and distribution services that he has provided from the time that the first issue was published in 2006, and to my wife and Assistant Editor Suzanne Hussar for their expertise, skills, and encouragement in editing, preparing, and distributing each issue.

Best wishes for a blessed Christmas season and a healthy and enjoyable new year!

Daniel A. Hussar

Editorial

“You Shall Not Murder” Exodus 20:13

The murder of a health insurance company CEO and the search and capture of a suspect have dominated the news. I was not going to address this tragedy but feel compelled to do so. The selection of the title for this commentary was the initial challenge until I consulted what I view as the ultimate authoritative reference – the Bible. The Ten Commandments include the directive, “You shall not murder.”

Responses to the death of the CEO are widely divergent from condemnation to celebration. To be clear, I consider it murder, for which there can be no justification or excuse. The suspect is NOT a “hero” and should not be celebrated! Police investigators have identified a manifesto written by the suspect but, to my knowledge, have not released the document or excerpts to the media and public. A pharmacist friend located the manifesto on social media and forwarded it to me.

I view the manifesto as an accurate, detailed, and well-written criticism of the failures of our current healthcare system. It identifies the complexities, high costs, and inequities of the system, as well as the profit motivations in denying/delaying the provision of appropriate care. He advocates “A Call to Arms: Revolt Against the Status Quo,” and refers to “actions” he plans but does not identify any specifics.

With respect to the manifesto, I, most health professionals, and thousands of patients who have been victimized by the healthcare system would quickly agree with a large majority of the statements. But why have the police investigators not released the contents of the manifesto? Are they concerned that the statements/criticisms will be viewed as valid by so many that there will be increased sympathy and support for the writer who committed a murder? Can the failure to release the

manifesto be equated with the lack of transparency that is viewed as an important failure of the healthcare system? On the day that I write this commentary I have not been able to confirm that the document I was provided is authentic and written by the suspect.

Why?

The suspect is well educated and clearly knowledgeable about the issues he criticizes. He is aware that there have been numerous previous strong criticisms of the healthcare system but there have not been meaningful changes, and “words alone are not enough.” He appears astute enough to recognize that, regardless of the validity of his concerns, the shock value of a murder will not result in support for the changes he strives to accomplish. Two families and their friends are devastated. The victim will be remembered as a son, husband, and father, and not as a CEO. The suspect has also caused irreversible harm for himself and his family. Those are the outcomes that will persist, while the suspect’s criticisms are ignored and forgotten.

So why did he commit murder? I do not have the information or expertise to provide answers. However, the increasing prevalence and experience with mental illness/breakdowns can provide some reasoning. As concerns and perceived injustices escalate and dominate thinking, the risk of obsession, anger, mental illness, and irrational actions also increases, as do consequences of insanity and violence.

Is there a double standard?

During the same time period in which the murder of the CEO and the motivation of the suspect command front-page media coverage, another story has emerged. “McKinsey Settles Civil, Criminal Opioid Claims,” but it is on the 9th page of section B of the December 14-15 edition of *The Wall Street Journal*. The consulting firm McKinsey provided advice and strategies to Purdue Pharma, Endo, and Mallinckrodt to maximize sales of their opioid products (e.g., OxyContin). The opioid crisis that has resulted, in part, from the actions of these companies has claimed tens of thousands of lives. McKinsey has already paid nearly \$1 billion to settle civil lawsuits and has now entered into a \$650 million settlement and deferred prosecution agreement with the Justice Department to resolve criminal and civil claims. The prosecution could be terminated if the company fulfills a compliance program.

The tens of thousands of victims of the opioid crisis are anonymous statistics to all but their families and friends. Should McKinsey, Purdue Pharma, and certain other manufacturers of opioid products be viewed as committing murder or at least being an accomplice? Is it sufficient that no individual at these companies is being held personally accountable for the consequences because their companies can afford settlements of hundreds of millions of dollars and the government considers criminal actions to be resolved? There is a double standard!

Daniel A. Hussar
DanH@pharmacistactivist.com

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Author/Editor/Publisher – Daniel A. Hussar, Ph.D.
Dean Emeritus and Remington Professor Emeritus at
Philadelphia College of Pharmacy
Assistant Editor – Suzanne F. Hussar, B.Sc. (Pharmacy)

The Pharmacist Activist, 1 Boulder Creek Lane, Newtown Square, PA 19073
E-mail: info@pharmacistactivist.com

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