

A Hospital Story

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ABSTRACT

This essay describes a major medical discovery wrapped inside a real family hospital crisis. The author was by misfortune at the anonymous center, but it could have involved anybody else outside the myopic hospital medical community. What was discovered was a too-obvious revelation about how to fix a dangerous medical protocol that was leading to untold thousands of tube-fed patients needlessly dying a painful death.

Here is a true story about something that happened to me at the start of 2000. It involves a lifesaving discovery I had to make that should have been known by hospitals many years before.

In 1993 my widowed and solitary mother of 75 years suddenly had a serious stroke while tending her front flower garden. She suffered several more events over the years, mostly minor and two significant, until she died *happy* just before her 84th birthday. Each unwelcome stroke increasingly debilitated her body, as if she were walking downstairs to doom step by step. Fortunately, her angelic personality was not altered, so the nine years from 1993 to 2002 were more glass-half-full than glass-half-empty.

I made the choice to not place her in a nursing home, as per her wishes. Yes, nursing homes have their place as a last resort, but warehousing would have hurt her sensitive spirit, accelerating

her demise. The choice I willingly and daily made over nine years cost me directly and in lost earning opportunity at least a half-million dollars. The house I grew up in was lost after her passing, and I had to take bankruptcy. I would do it all again for her in a heartbeat.

I moved into her house, and found a “chemically challenged” lady with good bedside manner to also move in and help with custodial nursing. This lady and my mother got along well; and her perky presence kept the kidnappers from social services at bay. People just couldn’t understand why any son would do all this for his mother. I heard this several times from medical and custodial professionals. I myself couldn’t understand why more sons don’t step up at time of need for the person who gave them life. In my case, she gave me life twice. This type of profound debt can never be repaid, but we can try.

There came a time when her body’s control over the direction swallowed food went down was compromised. On occasion food that should have gone down the esophagus went down her wind pipe. This misdirection would lead to aspirational pneumonia, which was treatable with antibiotics inside the hospital.

It wasn’t long before repeated hospital stays led to the doctors deciding to bypass her mouth with a flexible stomach feeding tube. Sterile cans of Osmolite® fluid were thereafter gravity fed from a plastic bag suspended above her chair or bed, directly into her stomach by way of a short feeding tube surgically implanted from outside her belly to inside her stomach. There would be no more aspirational pneumonia – but here is where things seriously transformed:

One of the ways I had for years kept the wolves from my door while maintaining my independence was to sell final expenses insurance. In that capacity I had randomly met several people in their homes who told me what had happened to an elderly loved one *shortly after* stomach tube feeding was initiated. All had

painfully died just a few months later from an impacted colon. Doctors couldn't help them at all. Everybody was puzzled.

My own mother later started down that steep slope. Not good. VERY not good. Her doctor, who specialized in senior care, was clueless. Nobody at the hospital ranked third best in Virginia offered any preventative guidance after they started her tube feeding. I was left alone with an innocent petite angel crying out in pain from her increasingly impacted colon. Can you even imagine my panicky emotions?

One of the many things I had done before was studying natural medicine in 1981 for a residential year at the former Santa Fe College of Natural Medicine. I earned a clinical herbology diploma, which is absolutely worthless in the job market. Nevertheless, I learned some key things in school, and read nearly 200 additional health and nutrition books and articles thereafter. Even with that background I didn't at first have a clue: *Don't the doctors, nurses, and hospitals know it all?*

Mother's family doctor was unable to prescribe laxatives for her condition, because she couldn't swallow anything. Antibiotics were also not a solution. I couldn't administer any oral herbal medicines for the same reason. Even rectal plugs and infusions did not make a difference. She just got progressively worse.

THEN IT CAME TO ME: *She just might improve with friendly flora. I knew that a healthy colon has in balance both friendly and other bacteria. Her Osmolite fluid was sterile. Constipating bad flora already in her intestines were thus not challenged and balanced by any good bugs. I mixed daily the contents of one capsule of Lactobacillus acidophilus powder with two ounces of stomach-tube-flushing water, which I injected.*

In a very few days she was much better. And within a week or so she was 100% back to normal feces. For over two years (before she died from other causes) she NEVER had any fecal impaction or diarrhea. That's all it took to save her life.

When I told her senior-specialist doctor about this too-obvious solution for her fatal condition, he was astonished and amazed. I asked him to tell his doctor friends, and he said he indeed would.

When mother was very soon thereafter back in the hospital from yet another mild stroke I mentioned her real world fecal recovery to her attending nurses: Same shocked reaction, with a lot of "Why didn't I think of this?" I told everybody I could speak with there to pass on this critical discovery, so that it would get around everywhere, not just there inside that hospital.

Once a gastric specialist came by her room to pick up a quick and easy consultation fee by inspecting her stomach tube. I told him about my mother's amazing recovery. His bored response: "I know that." I asked him why he hadn't told the other doctors about this natural cure for painful blockage and early death. He said nothing – but *gave me a dirty look* and quickly left the room. He knew I had just accused him of mass murder for his personal profits, and he was guilty.

Several years later I was back in the same hospital for another loved one. I asked the nurses what protocols they followed for people with stomach tubes. They said the tube feeding protocol includes daily probiotics, including *Lactobacillus* – and that early death from impaction was no longer an issue *as it once had been*.

None of them knew from where this critical change in colon hygiene originated. I smiled within myself, knowing that my own mother's personal misfortune had led to saving the lives of maybe thousands of innocent tube-fed victims near and far.

Ironically, if my mother had never gone down that road to stomach tube feeding, I might never have seriously thought about this natural cure – blindly trusting the doctors, nurses, and hospitals to do the best. However, necessity is the mother of invention, especially when it involves panic for your own mother.

I have long pondered the greater lessons to be learned from this mess. My greatest consternation involved how easy and natural was the cure – while nobody (except certain greedy gastric specialists) knew what to do. This lesson using common sense to find better treatment protocols can be applied to many problems.

We need to see with the eyes of children, or fools who rush in. We need to think of problems as opportunities. The world, the universe, is all there to be unlocked with the right mental keys. Sometimes new understanding is hard to gain, and sometimes it all seems to be so obvious in retrospect. Most real problems have logical solutions. Most questions in fields of science, such as medicine or astrophysics, have elegant answers, but not always along comfortable lines of previous inquiry.