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"health care is a right —
not a privilege"

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Director
Department of Public Health
San Francisco, California

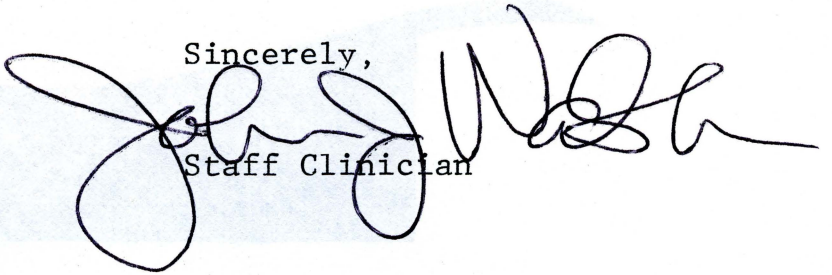
Dear Dr. Dritz:

We just wanted to let you know how much we appreciated your empathetic article which appeared in the February 21st issue of the New England Journal of Medicine. The medical aspects of homosexuality are indeed complicated by a variety of problems, the most important of which is ignorance. We are glad to see articles such as yours, which address those problems objectively and frankly. We especially appreciate your diplomatic tone in discussing this very emotional issue. Perhaps because we live in San Francisco (automatic enlightenment), we forget that homosexual patients are the victims of unwitting and even deliberate prejudice in the course of medical therapy.

To speak of our own patients for a moment. We are seeing a tremendous increase in the number of men presenting with diarrhea probably due to sexually transmitted pathogens. The cost of a workup which at a minimum would include a stool culture and an O&P is about \$40.00. If the O&P is repeated for a cycle of three, the cost of diagnosis may be \$70 or \$80. Many of our patients do not have that kind of money. If the diagnosis is amoebic dysentery, the cost of the Flagyl may be around \$50, and, of course, follow-up O&P's as a test of cure can bring up the total to \$150 easily. Because of these costs and the general unavailability of free VD testing and treatment, we are becoming saturated with these patients and anticipate a very significant increase in the asymptomatic reservoir here in San Francisco. We are also treating an extraordinary number of people with genital condylomata accuminata- over 200 patient visits per month. We aren't sure what to do about all this and like you, we are only hoping that the budget cuts in June won't be too horrible.

Again, thanks for addressing these problems.

Sincerely,


Staff Clinician