

Virtual Mentor

American Medical Association Journal of Ethics
June 2002, Volume 4, Number 6: 157-158.

FROM THE EDITOR

Duck Soup

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Lyrics from a song in the 1933 Marx Brothers' comedy *Duck Soup* entitled "The Country's Going to War," read as follows: "We're going to war. I think we're going to war."

Among movie experts, *Duck Soup* is considered the Marx Brothers' greatest and funniest cinematic masterpiece. This classic comedy is a short (70 minutes) but cutting satire on nationalism and dictators, diplomacy and war, international intrigue and espionage. When it was first released, the film was both a critical and commercial failure. Audiences were taken aback by such preposterous political disrespect, buffoonery, and cynicism at a time of political crisis. In fact, Fascist Italian dictator Mussolini banned the film in his country for mocking his regime. Fortunately, the film was rediscovered by the generation of 1960s college students and many others.

The film's story concerns Mrs Teasdale, a millionairess who will donate \$20 million to Freedonia, a Balkan state gone bankrupt through mismanagement, if it will agree to make Rufus T. Firefly (played by Groucho Marx) its dictator. Trentino, the ambassador from neighboring Sylvania, hires the sultry Vera Marcal to seduce and distract Firefly so that Trentino can move in on Mrs Teasdale, marry her, and get control of Freedonia. To aid his chicanery, Trentino hires Chicolini (played by Chico Marx), a peanut salesman, and his friend Pinky (played by Harpo Marx) as spies. Eventually war breaks out and, after much manic double-crossing and side-switching, Freedonia emerges victorious. Zeppo Marx, the other brother in his last Marx Brothers film, had a minor role playing, Bob Rolland, Firefly's assistant.

"We're going to war. I think we're going to war." All of us have seen on television, read in the newspaper, or heard on the radio that our country is at war. Most political and military pundits claim that this war is unlike any that we have fought in the past because our enemies do not have armies or soldiers in the traditional sense. While there may not be planeloads of body bags returning our servicemen and women, there still have been casualties. But for most of us, is there really a war going on? What should our role as citizens and more specifically as health care professionals be in this war that our elected leaders and most of us would agree is a just war.

In wars past, citizens on the homefront were asked to contribute in many ways—ration our use of supplies needed by the armed forces, recycle resources, spend thriftily, buy war bonds, plant victory gardens, (wo)man the factories. For the most part, very few of us are asked to sacrifice much this time—is there really a war going on? As physicians, many of our colleagues are serving in harm's way in the US armed forces, and their efforts must be commended. Recently, there have been disturbing accounts on the threat to the principle of medical neutrality as medical personnel and facilities are being targeted while coming to the aid of the injured on both sides of conflict. As a profession, we must denounce such actions. Many experts also believe that it is not a matter of *if* but *when* the next terrorist event will occur on the homefront. And the next time, the attack may involve a biological or chemical agent. With this apparent eventuality, physicians will undoubtedly be responsible for the initial detection and provide much of the subsequent care for those harmed and injured. As a profession, we must reaffirm our duty to care for and treat the sick and injured, without prejudice, though doing so may put us at risk.

Returning somewhat belatedly to how I started my comments. For those of you who are wondering why the political spoof is titled *Duck Soup*, it is reported that Groucho Marx had the following recipe: "Take 2 turkeys, 1 goose, 4 cabbages, but no duck, and mix them together. After one taste, you'll duck soup the rest of your life."

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