

tion of preventive care effectiveness and quality of life to influence future physician behaviors and attitudes.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force *Guide* provides a methodologic standard for selection of preventive strategies. Some will argue that the *Guide* has not gone far enough regarding interventional recommendations. Others will argue that interventional strategies for office-based and community-oriented care have been insufficiently tested. Most would agree, however, that an increase in education and research is needed regarding the impact of preventive services in diminishing premature deaths and enhancing quality of life. In the interim, in our practices, we can continue to curse the darkness of uncertainty or light a candle. —

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REFLECTIONS

The Death of Dr. Casey — A Fable

TUNA CASSEROLES and flowers. Healer, counselor, a giant of a man, the mighty Casey. But he died. Young Mudville can never be the same again, most of them said. The babies, the fractures, the vigils with the dying. The doctors at the medical school called it "continuity" and sent their students to observe. This man did make a difference, was cherished by those he touched. His career the stuff for poets, his death the stuff for public grief.

Testimonials! Casey knew them all, and never once said no. The midnight oil was just a lubricant for him. Soft voice. Big hands. Porcelain white coat. Antiseptic smell. An anaplastic desktop with polypoid stacks of books and charts. A jar with God knows what inside. Remember?

This week two years have passed and Mudville, well, it did survive. As a graveside prayer had accurately foretold, "vita mutatur non tollitur" — life changes but goes on. Despite predictions otherwise, a committee did attract a doctor — actually two, and someone called a nurse practitioner — something really new.

The clinic is a little different now. The waiting room has a carpet (although the bridge club said it was impractical). That doctor smell is less distinct. Remember the old coatroom with piles of snowy boots?

The secretary sits there now, with silicone assistants and shelves and shelves of multicolored records. Waiting now is rare. *Time* and *Vogue* stay almost wrinkle-free. They call themselves a "team" and they take their turns at doctoring, nights and even days. They have a lot more notes than Casey used to keep. Whichever one is there, they know about you inside out, and take the time to care. The doctors at the medical school call it "continuity" and send their students to observe. The people we met told all this with pride and hoped the team would stay a good long time.

So shed a tear for Casey,
Protect his values in your heart,
But linger not too long;
There's many ways to skin a cat,
And take good care of people too,
And continuity of care, well
May mean something else
Than what they've all been telling you.

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