

LETTERS

THE VITAMIN DEBATE

I was pleased to read the title "Vitamins—What's Fiction, What's Fact?" in the November/December table of contents, then disappointed in the content and perspective of the column.

Instead of reading what I had hoped would be a nursing assessment of the current knowledge on vitamin use, I read (again) that the American Psychiatric Association calls the popularization of vitamin treatment "deplorable." Naturally, members and beneficiaries of the medical-industrial complex (e.g., psychiatrists and drug companies) do not support efforts aimed toward simpler treatments that require less drugs and less medical supervision.

I expected some mention of the usefulness of organically versus synthetically prepared vitamins, but found none.

Finally, I regard the simplification of Dr. Linus Pauling's work into the statement that vitamin C has not been proven to prevent the common cold as a curious lack of depth in exploring recent nutrition literature, including the work of other esteemed scientists in the area of vitamin therapy. The fact is, new information comes to light each year that is suppressed by those who have a vested interest in maintaining costly, complicated methods of treatment.

As a nurse educated in the medical model and practicing for several years, I am just now getting my bearings in appreciating the difference between health-focused holistic care and medical model nursing. I hope in the future *GN* will offer more about nutrition and vitamin therapy than a rehash of what we are told to believe by the powers that be.

LINDA TUYN, R.N., N.Y.

Peggy Kloster Yen replies:

To suggest that the scientific establishment conspires to suppress the use of vitamins in treating disease implies that the scientific community speaks with one voice. It does not. However, scientists are alarmed both by the profitable business of

the use of anecdotal evidence to promote vitamin treatments.

Treating the whole person instead of just a disease is an admirable aim, but in doing so let's not confuse valid therapy with treatment based on conjecture and an understandable but foolhardy desire for easy cures.

INFORMATION, PLEASE

I showed the very first issue of this great magazine to our nursing staff. We have every issue coming here, to be shared by all.

I would like some assistance with a problem we need to solve: keeping our residents dry. I would appreciate information from other nursing homes, hospitals, and so on about the benefits of disposable adult diapers: control, cost, frequency of changes. Please write me in care of Editor, *Geriatric Nursing*, 555 W. 57 St., New York, N.Y. 10019.

We need more articles on general physical and mental conditions of the elderly.

JEAN BROUSSARD, R.N., La.

CONTINENCE FEATURE BENEFITS STAFF

Your issue on urinary problems and urinary incontinence (Nov./Dec. 1980) was very good.

It was interesting to me as an LPN who works in a nursing home, and of benefit not only to me but to fellow staff members: registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, qualified medication aides, and nurses' aides; along with some of the residents. My copy is very worn due to so many "takers" for the articles.

MARTHA HOWE, L.P.N., Ind.

NEWS, NOT OPINION

I must object strongly to your placing of pure editorial comment under the guise of news in the item entitled "What Now? Growing Old in America: The Next Four Years" (Jan./Feb., p. 6).

gram has not been revealed as I write this letter, so I fail to see how it can be reported as news. Secondly, I object to the totally biased flavor of the report, in which not one positive remark was made about a President who received an overwhelming mandate from the voters, a substantial number of whom are over 65.

Editorialize if you like, but base the commentary on fact and call it what it is—opinion, not news!

DIANE GIELOW, R.N., N.Y.

The editors reply: *The historical facts, quotations, and statistics in the news article are accurate.*

Our story was predicated on the opening sentence: "The policies of President-elect Ronald Reagan, if carried out as promised, will have serious consequences for the elderly." Every analyst and administrator interviewed predicted that a substantial cutback in Medicaid or the Social Security minimum benefit or any other relevant social program would seriously affect the aged and the nurses who serve them.

GN does not support any political party in preference to another. NEWS WATCH covers national events that affect the elderly, with an emphasis on proposed or accomplished federal legislation, and without regard to the popularity of any politician, party, or group.

At the time our news story was written and before President Reagan took office, key elements of his economic plan, including budgetary priorities and anticipated major cuts, had been selectively leaked to the press and to lobbyists, a fact confirmed by the Los Angeles Times, Washington Post, and New York Times.

President Reagan was elected by an overwhelming majority, as you say. A percentage of that majority may have been elderly persons. The responsibility of a free press is to report the President's plans, announced throughout his campaign, in relation to the electorate. GN, as a magazine directed to the elderly and their caregivers, is responsible to report these plans as they relate