

Editor's Note

Franklin E. Payne, Jr., M.D.

Medicare required physicians to have a provider number tattooed on their left arm, would the American Medical Association (AMA) protest? Dr. R.S. Laggard of Oelwin, Iowa, suggests that the AMA would lead a vigorous protest to such a thing, urging its members to refuse to comply with the outrage. The AMA's rallying cry would be something like: "You can put it on my right arm, but not my left."

If you are disappointed in the agenda and positions of the "big time" medical associations such as the AMA or your state and specialty medical associations, you may want to join the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons (AAPS), in whose newsletter Dr. Laggard's spoof appeared. The AAPS is not explicitly Christian, but its positions and actions reflect a biblical foundation in most of its members. Its meetings and publications are helpful and encouraging. Its legal counsel has directed some limited but strategic victories for the practice of private medicine. Jesus Christ is Lord over *all*, including medical politics. Write to the AAPS at 1601 N. Tucson Blvd., Suite 9, Tucson, AZ 85716 for membership information.

The current AAPS newsletter contains an item which dovetails with Dr. Glanville's open letter to physicians in this issue. "Stating that Georgia physicians have a history of inflating claims for office visits, William Roper, MD, former head of HCFA, ordered Aetna, the Medicare intermediary, to hire an independent, for-profit company to determine whether the bills were being padded." If you have an "us against them" adversary attitude toward insurance intermediaries, you'd better consider whether you are biblically correct in your view AND whether you are prepared to weather the audit and counterattack by the third parties. Though their computers to service your claims may be broken, the ones to investigate the coding and billing practices are being fine-tuned for investigations.

This issue contains an article prepared for the Christian Medical Dental Society (CMDS). Nearly 60 years old, the CMDS is a group of about 8000 physicians and dentists, along with students of those professions, who are committed to living out their faith through their professions. Opportunities in the CMDS include: symposiums on topics of urgent interest in medicine and dentistry, a bi-monthly newsletter, the *CMDS Journal* and local fellowships in prayer breakfasts, Bible study, and service projects. Medical professionals can participate in short-term medical missions overseas and in the U.S. The address for more information is: CMDS, P.O. Box 830689, Richardson, TX, 75083-0689.

Have you ever pondered the ethical implications of the relationship between physicians and pharmaceutical companies? A commendable article on the topic appears in the December 22/29, 1989, issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. (If they had more articles and actions of this sort, we would refrain from criticisms of the AMA such as the above). The article probes the influence of gifts upon physician behavior. Most physicians maintain that their professional judgment "cannot be bought." Maybe so, though it seems doubtful that the pharmaceutical houses are so foolish as to spend large sums on direct "detailing" of their drugs to physicians, accompanied by gifts which range from ballpoint pens, to meals to cash, without a return on their investment. Even if physicians are indeed not influenced by the gifts, are we not commanded to avoid also the *appearance* of evil? Quoting Dr. Fakes in Britain, the article poses the observation "..." are we being given a meal which many of our patients [who are paying for it in the United States] could not afford but which they would appreciate much more."