

## **DON'T BE QUIET!**

Happy late Fourth of July! Happy early Veteran's Day!

I write this letter sandwiched between two lovely holidays honoring our country and its freedom fighters. Throughout the years I have been honored to care for countless veterans and their families. I am always amazed at these families' sacrifices to preserve my way of life. I feel personally thankful and proud. My first memory of a veteran was my Dad—a Navy veteran. He was just a “deck swabber” as he used to say and he served before he met and married my Mom. My Dad wouldn't talk a lot about his experiences, so I know there was hardship in those years.

As I went through medical school and residency, I was able to do some rotations at the VA Hospital and Clinics. I heard amazing stories and saw so many wounded veterans waiting for hours to be seen and never complaining. These mostly older men shared their stories and experienced camaraderie in their meetings. I try not to generalize, but the older vets seemed so appreciative of the medical staff's efforts, while the younger vets seemed more demanding and dissatisfied.

It was during this time that I began to really enjoy geriatric patients and their families. Although I see patients of all ages, my older patients have a special appeal for me. I try to have special treats for them—birthday cards, educational lectures at senior groups, calling them for no reason except to say “hi,” etc. For me, age means wisdom (especially since I'm now fifty and counting!).

I wonder who will care for me in 20 or 30 years, especially with our Medicare/SGR fiasco. Many of my colleagues are opting out of Medicare and Medicare replacement plans. This is probably a reasonable decision, but one I'm currently wrestling with with no satisfactory answers. It actually saddens me and sickens me to think about how our Congress again ducked out of solving the problem.

Shortly after September 11, 2001, I saw a patient in his eighties who was a veteran. In the few days since the attack he had actually called a military recruiter to see if he could re-enlist or help out in any way. He offered to do anything, including blood donation. This is the caliber of man that I do not want to lose as a patient.

If you haven't done so already, please go online and look at the Texas Medical Society petition to Congress (<http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/meltdown/>) asking for a sustainable fix to the SGR. You may not agree with or sign the petition. You may agree with the petition. Either way, please share your ideas. Don't be quiet. We must treat the eldest and most vulnerable among us with reverence and respect and not allow the government to make it unaffordable for us to care for them.

President's Page – August 2010

In thanksgiving for the elderly among us and especially for veterans and their families,

**Susan Whitely, MD**

**President**

Please send your comments to me at: [swhitely@mcmsonline.com](mailto:swhitely@mcmsonline.com)