

# A Home for Sick and Worn-out Doctors

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*Editor's note: The following is a letter to the editor first published in WMJ, Volume 3 (No. 4), September 1904, p. 195 from Johan De Besche, MD, Milwaukee; Arthur J. Patek, MD, Editor*

**T**wenty miles northeast of Boston is a village called Stow. Here there is what is known as "Red Acre" farm. It is a farm for worn-out, ill-treated, and crippled horses. A young woman has here provided a home for friendless horses. In this institution no color line is drawn, there is no difference of school or nationality, no race prejudice. All kinds of horses and mules are welcome, if friendless.

Cats have their benefactors who provide them with homes and care. Dogs have their days, and when the nights are long, they rest in beautiful graves. This expression of sympathy for their mute friends is both pathetic and commendable. But did anyone ever hear of a home for friendless, ill-treated, worn-out doctors? There are homes for those weak in mind, weak in body, weak in morals, weak in finances, both young and old. There are sanatoria for presumptives and consumptives. There are water cures and Keeley (kill'em) cures, but there is not one sanatorium for doctors. We have seen doctors donate to libraries and to universities, but does anyone know of a donation by a wealthy doctor to his less fortunate colleagues?

In every community there are able, hardworking, honest doctors, who are poor financiers. When they have spent the best part

of their lives, thoughts and energy, they often awake to find themselves penniless, with broken health. Their only capital, their physical and mental health, has slipped away from them, as has their money between their fingers. No one has any use for him—the sick and worn-out doctor.

It is a prevailing idea of the public that a doctor ought to be in independent circumstances, and that it is his own fault if he is not. Personal, domestic, and professional expenses keep a doctor constantly in the harness. Irregular and insufficient hours for sleep, hurried and disturbed meals, exposure to the inclemencies of the weather, with no time for proper care of self, no relaxation from the responsibilities thrust upon him, too conscientious to cry enough—in fine—unable to administer his physical and financial affairs, in his rush to alleviate the ills of others "Herr Doctor" sooner or later becomes comparable to the broken-down, helpless, and apathetic old cart-horse.

Many a good man could be restored to health, many deserving escape the county hospitals, if there were a home for sick and friendless doctors, a home provided by and for doctors. Let us have a "Red Acre" farm here in Wisconsin for our broken down brother-beast-of-burden.

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