

# Practical Psychology

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*Editor's Note: The following editorial was published in WMJ, July, 1967; Volume 66, No. 7, p. 283.*

The Milwaukee Journal recently pointed its editorial finger at the consistently negative attitude of organized medicine first toward the establishment of Medicare and now toward its expansion. The newspaper noted that Medicare is here to stay and that it will probably be expanded despite the opposition of the American Medical Association. "It would be better," concluded the Journal, "if expansion came with medicine's cooperation and support."

Contrary to the predictions of spokesmen for the AMA and the anticipation of many doctors, the establishment of Medicare has not meant the end of free enterprise in the practice of medicine. It has not significantly interfered with the relationship between doctor and patient, and it apparently has eased the burden of health care costs for many elderly people. Social Security costs have increased for the entire population and the volume of paperwork imposed on doctors has risen precipitously but, on balance, Medicare probably must be assessed as a positive value.

What Medicare might have been without the consistent opposition of organized medicine is hard to say. Unquestionably the opposition

served to limit excesses that might have been written into the bill; the moderate, non-disruptive character of the present program derives from the creative democratic process that produces something less than the proponents wanted to have and something more than the opponents wanted to permit.

Opposition is not useless when it is realistic and constructive. Unfortunately, the medical profession has a reputation in some quarters for blind, mindless opposition for the sake of opposition. As the Milwaukee Journal suggests, organized medicine has an important role in the planning of future health care programs. The programs are going to come about anyway, and it would be better for the representatives of medicine to approach their problem positively. It is psychologically smarter to take a position of approval *with amendments* rather than simple opposition. To work to curb excesses, to limit extremes, to modify and control is not to compromise principle. It is, instead, to participate, and by participating, to act in a responsible, socially valuable manner.

—D.N. Goldstein, MD, Kenosha, Editorial Director

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