

## Lights, Camera, Prevention?

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*The Place:* Hollywood, California.

*The Scene:* A noon meeting at a trendy bistro.

*The Players:* Four television producers discussing a letter from one of the network board members, a CEO for a large health care conglomerate.

PRODUCER #1. Can you believe this?

PRODUCER #2. We've got the top-rated medical docu-drama, and this bozo is complaining that we're *glamorizing* urgent care!

PRODUCER #3. Look at this! He also says we're "contributing to the high cost of health care." Who the hell does he think he is?

PRODUCER #4. We're here to entertain! Whoever said we're supposed to pay any attention to reality?

PRODUCER #1. Look, we've got to placate this guy, or we'll be writing intros to *Wheel of Fortune*.

PRODUCER #2. OK. He says something here about how "hospitals are now considered cost centers as opposed to profit-making revenue centers" and "couldn't we find some way of making preventive health care exciting."

PRODUCER #3. Well, uh . . .

PRODUCER #4. Wait a minute! I've got a great idea, uh . . .

PRODUCER #1. (*Is snoring loudly.*)

PRODUCER #2. Here, try this . . .

*The following scene is outlined:*

A local family physician's office. A 45-year-old woman along with her entire immediate family is shoehorned into a tiny examination cubicle. The background music strains with the tension on her face. The camera slowly pans the anxious clan. Handkerchiefs are rhythmically twisted by white-knuckled hands. The door explodes open, nearly pithing little Jimmy, who was standing too close to the knob. The doctor's face is a kaleidoscope of emotion. "Mrs. Jones, your cholesterol is *down* to 189!" The room rocks with exultation. Tears erupt, warm embraces are exchanged. The clinic staff is drawn into the celebratory fray, marriage proposals are exchanged by complete strangers as the cacophonous crowd parades into

the parking lot while the closing credits reel on the television screen.

PRODUCER #3. Well . . .

PRODUCER #4. (*While laughing loudly, chokes on a piece of rice cake.*)

PRODUCER #1. (*Quickly awakens and successfully does the Heimlich maneuver on PRODUCER #4.*) You'll never see action like that on *Marcus Welby!*

PRODUCER #2. Look, we're not getting anywhere on our own. My sister-in-law is a family doc. I've heard her tell some wonderful stories about keeping her patients healthy—stuff with real texture. And here's the kicker: the action doesn't occur in an emergency room *or* an operating suite.

PRODUCER #3. Come to think of it, my dad's 78 and still plays basketball with his grandchildren. He can still walk faster and farther than I can.

PRODUCER #4. I know too many guys who've danced the bypass waltz, and the *last* thing I want is one of those zippers on my chest.

PRODUCER #1. I can tell you I never want to be the subject of some "interesting case."

PRODUCER #2. Look, maybe we can do something positive that actually benefits the audience. GAD, I can't believe I said that.

PRODUCER #3. Let's bring this doc and a few of her partners in for a meeting.

PRODUCER #4. Maybe we can salvage something from all this.

PRODUCER #1. Like our JOBS!

PRODUCER #2. OK. How about *Doogie Welby, MD?*

PRODUCER #3. Yeah, I really like that!

PRODUCER #4. You know, that really resonates with me!

*The scene fades as the California sun sets through the hazy afternoon.*

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