

A. Jolayne
Farrell

Ex-patient fears polio recurrence

Dear Jo:

My husband had polio years ago. His recovery was successful, and he has led a very active life since then. We are quite concerned lately though, as he has been experiencing some weakness in his muscles (the same muscles that were affected by the polio) and we were wondering if he is having a recurrence of polio. We'd appreciate your comments on this. Thank you, Mrs. E.L.

Dear Mrs. L.:

Your husband's problem with muscle weakness is a medical one; he should speak to his doctor about it as soon as he can.

You and your husband may be interested in the study on post-polio patients being done by the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

A group of former polio patients who experienced a return of weakness in some muscles have been followed by the NIH for more than 10 years.

Careful examination indicates that the overall rate of weakening is about 1 percent of muscle strength a year. It is so slow that it takes several years to be apparent to the patient. Not all muscles are affected, and the weakness is not life-threatening.

AN INTERESTING theory has been proposed by the NIH researchers.

They propose that these delayed effects — referred to as the post-polio syndrome — relate directly back to the recovery process.

Polio is a viral infection of the nerve cells that control skeletal muscles. When the case is severe, the disease damages or destroys some of these nerve cells. During the recovery process, surviving cells evidently send out extra branches to muscle fibers that otherwise would lack a nerve supply.

Thus, one nerve cell attempts to take over the work of others as well as its own.

Apparently, the NIH researchers suggest, the additional demand proves excessive. Some of the extra branches die off, and the result is a gradual weakening of the affected muscles.

ACCORDING TO this study, the evidence does not suggest that the post-polio syndrome results from a reactivation of the original infection (as is your concern, Mrs. L.), or that it is some other new disease process that is killing previously normal cells.

Rather, it appears to be a fatiguing of the mechanism that was originally responsible for recovery years ago.

If you would like more information on this study, I suggest you ask your local librarian to send for a copy of the report as written up in the New England Journal of Medicine, April 10, 1986.

I am grateful to be living in a time when this dreadful disease is no longer a threat every summer.

Readers can write to Jolayne Farrell at P.O. Box 66, Postal Station G, 1075 Queen Street East, Toronto, Ontario M4M 3E8, Canada.

Compassion rare in world

BIBLICAL FAITH sets forth the ideal of compassion as the noblest goal of human striving. The demand to express the quality of compassion was not left to the whim of the moment.

Mercy was built into the structure of Biblical law, to educate and refine the sensibilities of the people. Provide for the poor, the fatherless, the widow, the laborer, the criminal, even the enemy.

Compassion is rare in our world today. It is as scarce as it was in the age of the prophets of ancient Israel.

TO SOME, compassion is not a virtue but a deficiency; not a merit, but a sign of weakness.

Nietzsche, the German philosopher whose teaching influenced the ideology of the Nazis, despised compassion as a form of weakness. He wrote: "A man loses power when he pities . . . Nothing is more unhealthy than pity."

Nietzsche had his way, and compassion was removed from the German character. The world witnessed then the most diabolical horror of all times when a whole nation was devoted to cruelty, hatred, and destruction.

THERE HAS been so much violence and suffering in this century that the senses have become dulled. We have viewed so many images of death that its sight no longer sickens us, its stench no longer disturbs us.

And yet events occur which, at least for a moment, shock the sensibilities of millions of people. This past week, 21 people were buried in Istanbul, the victims of a terrorists attack in the synagogue in which they were worshipping on the Sabbath. Their unforgivable crime was that they were Jews.

Terrorists entered the synagogue, locked the door and without warning or pity or the slightest expression of mercy and with a cruelty so savage as to defy description, destroyed the



moral perspectives

**Rabbi Irwin
Groner**

lives of all who were in sight, and then sought to obliterate their bodies.

It is not enough that the terrorists themselves were killed in the perpetration of this atrocity. These murders had accomplices who have not as yet been identified, let alone summoned to justice.

The killers were equipped, trained, indoctrinated, recruited, and financed. They are mercenaries who carry out a continuing war waged by radical and fanatical Arab leaders and groups against the state of Israel, against Jews, against United States and against the democracies of Western Europe.

THERE ARE governments that have permitted their capitals and territories to serve as headquarters and training grounds for gangs of assassins. We call upon all who have harbored terrorists groups to remove them from their midst and to deprive them of sanctuary.

We call upon the government of the United States to take appropriate measures to enforce this policy, and to ensure that those governments who have provided direct or indirect support for these acts of violence should suffer the consequences.

The cruelty of our time has had its evil effect on our society. Who would have believed a decade ago that a time would come when airplanes would be hijacked and unarmed men, women and children would be held as hostages; when cruel people would put poison into medicine bot-

than to uphold and renew the message of compassion. I believe that the great foundation of ethics is this: A person must have a mercy on everyone and everything; to be pitiless is a grave sin, perhaps the greatest of which man is capable.

We pray for the souls of those who have died. We pray for their grief-stricken families. We pray for the people of Israel, for the Arab nations, and we pray for humanity. We pray for the wisdom, strength and courage to strive for compassion.

Otherwise we shall be guilty of the sin of omission as described by Edmund Burke who wrote, "All that is necessary for evil to triumph, is for good men to do nothing."

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Thinking for two.

Parents-to-be are more assertive today about their hospital choices. They want to be certain about the quality of the hospital experience for both mother and child. The medical aspects are most critical, but comfort, friendliness, family involvement, and privacy are also important. So families check things out for themselves. It's not just the doctor's choice anymore. That's why hospitals are talking about their differences. And the differences at Grace are significant. Grace is a teaching hospital. And that means patients receive more attention from more professionals. It also means that patients see improved procedures introduced sooner. Grace is a leader in the prenatal, neonatal and high risk pregnancy specialties, but normal deliveries get lots of special attention, too.

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Thinking for two means planning ahead. We think Grace should be a future mother's first thought. A member of The Detroit Medical Center. Affiliated with the School of Medicine, Wayne State University. (313) 966-3100.

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