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The first Surgeon General's Report on Oral Health was released on May 25, 2000. The landmark report was the first to significantly link oral and general health. And I can't believe it's been more than a decade since I met Hunter "Patch" Adams, M.D. This *Pasadena Magazine* issue highlights our community's top physicians; in six-months or so you'll meet the area's top dentists. Healthcare reform has recently become law; research and technology have taken us to clinical places unimagined in the past. But there's one special aspect of medical and dental care that remains a challenge in search of transformation. And I contend there's reason for hope.

I met Patch Adams in 2003 at a conference in Orlando, Florida attended by numerous D.D.S type gunners and their teams. While my team had first row seats, I was glad I was allowed to crash the party.

Doc Adams was bullied as a teenager and hospitalized three times in one year for wanting to end his life. But Adams decided "you don't kill yourself, stupid; you make a revolution." The revolution became the alternative care approach Adams implemented as a physician.

Back in 2003, Adams had provided care for more than 30,000 patients without a fee, third party reimbursement, or malpractice insurance. Patch believed the business of medicine had destroyed the practice of medicine.

"Patch" Adams couldn't be reached for this interview but if you've ever read my stuff you know their physical absence never stopped my

Q&A sessions with Pete Carroll, Andy Rooney, or the Dalai Lama. Doc Adams hasn't changed much since our first meeting 11-years ago; he still has waist length silver and blue hair and wouldn't be caught dead not wearing a clown suit.

Q. "Dr Adams, I know you thought Robin Williams was pretty tame in the movie but what are your thoughts regarding Obamacare?"

"Dr. V, please call me Patch. Yeah, I was a lot more creative than Robin and at the same time, I was much more than a funny doctor. Effective care requires a human connection; humor and play can authentically help gain that connection. I also think that individual health cannot be separated from the health of the family and community. Okay, I'm an idealist so like I said back in October, 2011, "I think the President sold

out". The opportunity to do more was there...but the President compromised. We have a healthcare industry; what we need is healthcare community."

Q. I still remember the clip you showed us back in Orlando. I remember you and your associates comforting a little girl suffering from severe burns. Can you please share?

Some of my colleagues and I are also clowns; maybe you've noticed the outfit and my prematurely blue hair. The Italian government sponsored our visit to Kabul, Afghanistan. The little girl was in severe pain with third degree burns; there was little we could do to support the medical care. All we could do was smile, express love, and make a connection. I'm sure you remember what happened (the little girl relaxed a bit, calmed down some...and returned a smile.)

On one level, the message was killing doesn't stop killing; especially when many of the victims are innocents. On another level, the message spoke to what's too often missing when we do have the technical means to make a difference."

Q. "Patch, is it possible to quantify the consequences for healthcare providers and care by the numbers?"

"*The Journal of the American Medical Association* published the definitive piece back in 1997; it's been cited more than 900 times in research articles. The '97 paper found that doctors get sued far less often when they spend more time engaging patients. The JAMA study found that doctors who had never been sued spent an average of just 3 extra minutes talking with patients.

Q. "Dr. V, a question for you: have you seen any change since 2003?"

"I would say a qualified yes...with definite room for growth. My entire perspective was transformed during the time I was my mom's caregiver. I think many of my colleagues have had similar experiences with their parents and other loved ones. Our own practice advisor actually coaches the value of personalized teambuilding and care.

We've actually structured our practice to see all patients as friends and family; our intention is "...making dentistry fun." And we're not alone. When I attended your presentation back in 2003, I cried like a baby; you remain a major hero."

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