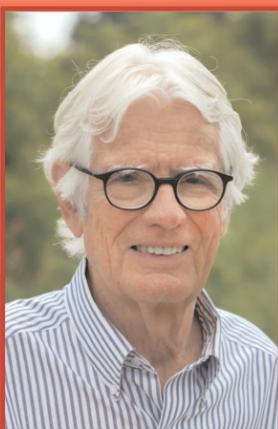


# HEALTH CORNER



## The Doctor Game

By W. Gifford-Jones M.D.

### Are North Americans Wimps When It Comes to Pain?

How do people in other countries handle pain following various surgical procedures? It's a pertinent question today in view of the debate on opioid usage in North America. A recent report in JAMA Network Open, published by the American Medical Association, confirms what I have argued, that North Americans have become wimps when confronted with pain. So who is responsible for this?

I first became aware of what was happening to pain control many years ago. I had an impacted wisdom tooth which my dentist said must be removed. So I called a dental surgeon in Toronto, whom I had known for years, and made an appointment for this procedure.

Following the tooth's removal, he said, "Be sure to take this painkiller every six hours as there will be significant pain." But since I have never taken painkillers without good reason, I ignored his advice.

The following morning the dental surgeon called and asked my wife how I was feeling. He was surprised to hear I was at the hospital performing surgery. I had some pain, but not enough to take a painkiller.

This study looked at the percentage of patients in Canada, the United States, and Sweden, who took an opioid prescription for seven days after laparoscopic (keyhole) surgery to remove the appendix, gallbladder, meniscus of the knee, or breast lump.

The results were shocking. It showed that 79% of Canadians and 76% of Americans used opioid prescription drugs following these procedures. But only 11% of patients in Sweden needed an opioid drug! You do not need to be a statistician to surmise that something has gone awry in North America.

But there is more to this problem than opioid drugs. A report in the Journal of the American Medical Association shows that 16.7% of Americans filled one or more prescriptions for psychiatric drugs, most of which were meant to treat depression. Even more worrying, they were taking them to treat long-term depression. Again, you need neither be a statistician nor a sociologist to detect a societal problem.

This mania for pills of many kinds has not happened overnight. There's little doubt that my dentist friend and many doctors are over over-prescribing opioid drugs and other pain medication.

But you cannot lay the all blame on the medical profession. For some years, patients have begun to believe that in our modern society, there should be complete freedom from even minor pain. This fact has been driven into their psyche, night after night, by big pharma TV ads. Millions of dollars are spent on over-dramatized, almost laughable TV ads, that show how easy it is to be totally rid of the least pain.

Today, there are also fewer requirements to consult a doctor to obtain a prescription for a variety of painkillers. Just walk into any pharmacy to see the displays of over-the-counter drugs available to cure various aches and pains.

Unfortunately, we have become victims of "pillitis". Besides, it's not just the problem of pain. Each year tens of millions of dollars are spent to treat heartburn and other mild medical conditions, ones that could be prevented by reasonable adjustments to lifestyle.

This study will not get the headlines it deserves. So I must repeat, when TV ads present misleading messages about health, we must all become educated patients and seek the advice of the family doctor before taking over-the-counter medication. And if the doctor offers a prescription, be sure to question the purpose of it. Learn about your options and turn down unnecessary pills.

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**SPECIAL NOTICE - SPECIAL NOTICE - SPECIAL NOTICE - SPECIAL NOTICE -**  
There will be a new book coming out in September, entitled, "No Nonsense Health - Naturally!" with a subtitle, The Natural Health Philosophy of W. Gifford-Jones, MD.  
**PICK UP A COPY!!!**



## Direct Answers

from Wayne & Tamara

### Grand Canyon of Need

I cannot come to a conclusion about my current relationship. My boyfriend has all the qualities I look for in a man. I feel if we were supposed to be together I wouldn't have to go through all this stress just to feel loved by him.

What it comes down to is, it doesn't take a lot to make him feel loved. I, on the other hand, am high maintenance. I don't think that's a bad thing. We are just on two different spectrums. This is affecting the way I act towards him, and I am always mad at him and frustrated.

I don't know if it's worth it to try counseling or should I just break up?

**Danika**

Danika, above is our summary of the letter you wrote last week. In that letter two lines stand out like bookends. In the beginning you told us you come from an affectionate, loving family, and you said you planned on living life by yourself and traveling the world alone. For good measure you added that "I always said, in the end, love causes more hurt than good."

Your beliefs don't square with coming from a family of love. But people hurt at an early age say things like that, or they express a desire to live life alone in a cabin in a wilderness. What drama of childhood, what insecurities do you have, that when a good man tells you he loves you, you don't believe him?

Near the end of the letter you admit your boyfriend is perfect, but "I, on the other hand, am high maintenance" and cannot feel loved by him. That line is a confession that "some part of me knows the problem is me, not him." You want an extreme show of love, like slaying a dragon or risking his life, and likely even that would not be enough.

There is such duality in your words. You say he has a good heart yet he doesn't love you. How can this be? A good heart is the expression of love. Everything a man could offer seems to be there, except it is not enough to fill the pit of need within you.

You mention your boyfriend's inability to make you feel loved as if it is a flaw within him. You tell a man who loves you that he doesn't love you. You say you need him to understand your intentions, but that isn't the issue.

You need to understand your own deeper intentions and why you are trying to drive him away. The size of the love you need is what needs fixing. This is an internal issue that needs to come to the surface in individual counseling.

Change is hard and you don't want to change, so he must. In effect, that is what you are saying. You ask if it's worth it to try counseling, or should you simply break up. It is not a dichotomy. We suggest both: breaking up and individual counseling for you.

The sad thing is we think he loves you. We feel sorry for him, but you are the one acting hurt and you are the one blaming him.

He is not big enough to fill your hole of need. No man is. The sky is not big enough to fill your hole of need. The problem is, some part of you is telling you that you are unlovable.

**Wayne & Tamara**

Send letters to: [DirectAnswers@WayneAndTamara.com](mailto:DirectAnswers@WayneAndTamara.com)

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