If you ventured upon my father, his wrinkleless face and sharp wit, you’d think he’s doing well for a man of 70 or so. He is 90. He was liberated from Buchenwald concentration camp on April 4, 1945, contracted meningitis shortly thereafter, and was one of the fortunate few to receive life-saving intravenous penicillin. He walks on his treadmill 45 minutes each morning and then briskly completes the jumbo word puzzle in the daily paper. He can converse in 8 languages, chants innumerable biblical psalms by memory, plays bridge twice weekly and he still goes to work every Friday.

Recently, my father called to tell me that he had his yearly cardiology appointment. The cardiologist performed a carotid ultrasound and my father was later called by the physician’s office with a message that the cardiologist needed to talk with him about the findings. My father is stoic but I could discern some angst in his voice. I told him that it took 90 years to develop some blockage in his carotid artery, so in another 90 years or so we may have to deal with it.

The future of medicine is grim unless we can encourage its practitioners to uphold the values that drove each of us to become physicians and to withstand the urge to do more, when doing less is in the best interest of our patients.

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Quotes: Rx for life

“Medicine is the art of engagement with the human condition rather than with the disease.”
— Bernard Lown, MD
Nobel Peace Prize recipient, professor of cardiology emeritus at the Harvard School of Public Health; author: The Lost Art of Healing

Submitted by: Barbara H. Roberts, MD, FACC, Director, the Women’s Cardiac Center at The Miriam Hospital

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