



Don't Wear Lead Underwear

By Barry Pascal, Pharm.D.

Humorist, Satirist, and All-Around Nice Guy

Well, we just came back from another great trip. This time we took off and landed in a variety of countries and at many different airports. From this experience, it is definitely clear to me that we are in a heightened security period – worldwide.

At Los Angeles International Airport – LAX -- we went through one of the new full body scans. I was surprised when the TSA agent instructed me to “stand on those spots and spread your legs.”

“Thank you for the offer, but did you know I was married,” I quipped.

They laughed and told me that it would only take a few moments to scan me. I snapped back that they could take a little longer if they wanted to. Then I asked if I could get copies of the pictures, but they said they did not take pictures, only a brief scan.

“I have some extra time; can I watch a few of the other scans while I am waiting?” I asked.

They were all very polite and put up with all of my shenanigans and seemed to get a kick out of the jokes. I think it was because everyone else in line was yelling and screaming about the new procedures.

After I completed the scanning process, I asked if I could get a “pat-down” by the young lady behind the document counter. They said that they only pat-down certain people or in certain circumstances. I asked again and slipped the agent I was talking to a crisp new \$5 bill, saying that it would be a special circumstance for me if that young lady would pat me down. As a matter of fact, it was OK with me if she patted me down several times. I explained that I was only trying to give myself a little goodbye gift for my trip. He refused the \$5 and thanked me for the thought.

Needless to say, they did not pat me down. I went through the inspection line five times and they still wouldn't do it. Oh well, at least I felt good about being the good citizen helper and not harassing or hassling them about their job. And after watching how well they did their jobs, I felt very safe when the plane took off. It didn't help however, that I overheard the captain tell the chief flight attendant that they expected rough weather over the Rockies and he'd like another gin and tonic. But that's another story.

The treatment we received at LAX was not the same as in France, Italy or Turkey. None of those stern foreign TSA-like agents have a sense of humor. They all either had some kind of bowel problem or they were fresh out of the army and never got to use their bowels. None of the overseas airports we used had scanners, but all of them had pat-down procedures. They were courteous but not friendly, and they used a pat-down technique they must have learned from a divorce attorney or from watching *Miami Vice*.

At any rate, we made it through every terminal inspection point. Many times we had a guide with us who spoke the language and things went much more smoothly than when we were on our own.

In this day and age, we must all go through these inspections if we are to travel safely. I felt much more secure after each set of agents inspected passengers, luggage, carry-ons and, yes, performed pat-downs. I was surprised at how similar the procedures are in each country and how much labor and resources are thrown at making sure there are no more 9/11 terrorist incidents -- anywhere.

For me, I was happy to go through all the security—it removed for me another worry from our trip. However, I never got that pat-down, and Shirley refuses to dress up as a TSA agent.

Barry Pascal, our former North Valley Honorary Mayor and former Honorary Sheriff, owned Northridge Pharmacy for 32 years and is now retired. He has written seven comedy books and writes a humorous column for the California Pharmacists Association Journal and our North Valley Community News. Barry is currently trying to teach Shirley the correct pat-down procedure.

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