

January 09, 1996

Mrs. Elaine Mxxxxxx  
4380 Txxxxxx St.  
San Diego, CA 92NNN

PF# 998 4N NN

Dear Mrs. O,

On January 3, 1996 you completed a medical evaluation at our Clairemont Mesa offices with my assistant, David Buckley, PA. I have reviewed your records and would like you to know the diagnoses that he established as a result of this evaluation. I shall also provide you additional information about some of them. This will give you a chance to see the way a doctor looks at the state of your health. Hopefully, the information in this letter will allow you to have a better understanding of the state of your health, perhaps some understanding of how it got that way, and enable you to know how to improve it should you so choose. This information is in your medical record where it is held confidentially and available only to physicians you see within this medical group. It will be released to no one without your signed authorization.

**Diagnosis:**

SABIR

Depression  
Chronic constipation  
Chronic Low Back Pain  
Night sweats  
Palpitations  
Musculoskeletal chest pains  
Heavy smoker  
COPD  
Overweight  
Stress incontinence  
Calcium elevated

**Secondary diagnoses:**

Lymphoma, 1974

At Kaiser Permanente's Department of Preventive Medicine in San Diego we have had significant research experience with patients who have had a history of sexual abuse (signified by the acronym SABIR for Sexual Abuse, Incest, Rape). These experiences often have lifelong consequences. Usually, patients do not understand the links to current problems

because the cause may have been decades earlier and understandably we all try hard to forget unpleasant and threatening things. However, such things are not so readily put out of mind and the common long term consequences of sexual abuse are: depression, obesity (or less commonly anorexia), abdominal and pelvic pains, chronic headaches, drug or heavy alcohol use, and marital problems. Obviously, any of these symptoms can have other causes, but we repeatedly have seen that they are common after sexual abuse, even decades later. Should you want to read about this, you might find useful two of John Bradshaw's books, "The Family", and "Family Secrets." They are available at almost any mall bookstore. Elizabeth Adams' excellent autobiography, "Understanding the Trauma of Childhood Psycho-Sexual Abuse" is available either at Positive Choice or from the publisher at (800) 441-6224. You might wish to subscribe to an excellent monthly newsletter, The Healing Woman, (415) 728-0339. If you want specifically to discuss treatment options, you can call my nurse, Mrs. Winfree, at 858-268-5695 and set up an appointment to see me for that purpose.

Depression is one of the more common problems we see in the office, though often it comes in disguised as some other symptom like troubled sleep, chronic fatigue, irritability, weight changes, or drinking. Thus, because the secondary symptoms are what often are most noticeable, they may get treated instead of the underlying cause. This is unfortunate because effective and safe antidepressant medications (not to be confused with tranquilizers) have been available for about thirty years. At the proper dose, they often make a significant difference in patients' lives. Depression commonly happens in situations where anger or resentment is felt by not expressed. Sometimes this is unconscious. Because depression commonly occurs in people who grew up in it, or presently are in, troubled families, you might find it helpful to read either of John Bradshaw's books, "The Family" or "Family Secrets." Other books on depression can be found in the self-help section of any large bookstore. Should you wish to discuss treatment further, you could do so with your physician.

Chronic constipation is not a disease but the way some people respond to stress in their lives and to low fiber content in their diets. That is often a surprise to people who have suffered from it for years. What one does about it depends totally on how much constipation disturbs you; it does *not* directly cause your body any damage. If treatment is needed, most people will find that adding high fiber foods to their diet works very satisfactorily. Some will regularly add to their diets a high fiber breakfast cereal like Fiber One; other might prefer a concentrated fiber like Metamucil. A few will resort to the chronic use of laxatives; this is unfortunate since the regular use of laxatives ends up causing the very problem one set out to treat. I have seen a few patients cured through medical hypnosis. Should this be of interest, get in touch with me and we can discuss it further.

Chronic low back pain is one of the most frustrating problems we see in medicine. From the standpoint of diagnosis, chronic low back pain is what we have left after disk disease, arthritis, osteoporosis, and other recognizable problems are excluded. Most physicians feel it is

the result of weak back muscles being strained, plus prolonged contraction of those same back muscles as a result of nervous stress. Treatment consists of back strengthening exercises, carried out at a time you are not having much pain. A fine book discussing all aspects of this has been written by Dr. John Sarno and published by Time Warner Books under the title, "Healing Back Pain". Any bookstore should be able to get you a copy if it is not already in stock.

Night sweats are difficult to diagnose without further, precise information. The key question is whether they are associated with fever. To answer this question, keep a thermometer next to your bed at night. When you awaken in a sweat, take your temperature and record it. Should you be running temperatures over 100°, make an appointment to see your regular doctor and bring in your temperature record. If you do not have a fever during these sweats, then they are simply a nuisance with no significance. Night sweats often have a stress basis, manifesting themselves during sleep, sometimes with troubling dreams that are forgotten by morning.

Palpitations, or skipped heart beats, in your case are a sign of stress and not heart disease. Though annoying, or even frightening if not understood, they are not dangerous. In those instances when they are disturbing, certain safe medications can be used to suppress them.

During your visit you told us about some chest pains you are having. It is clear to us, both by your description of these pains and by examination, that these pains are from muscles in your chest wall and have nothing to do with your heart. This so-called musculoskeletal chest wall pain is due to spasm of chest wall muscles, either from some fibers having been pulled during ordinary use or from prolonged contraction of muscles under conditions of nervous tension. In either case, nothing more needs to be done; relief can be gotten from remedies like Advil or Tylenol. The abdominal pains you have are also stress related and common in women who have been molested as children.

Basically, people smoke to de-stress themselves, to relax. Since you are smoking, we have referred you to the Smoking Cessation Program at Positive Choice (858-573-0040). If you follow through with this, you will find it a particularly helpful program with an excellent success record. The fact that you have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) might further motivate you since this is highly likely due to your smoking. Generally you can expect that *further* lung damage will stop when you quit smoking; many times breathing becomes easier. In addition to stopping smoking, for the of your life it will be important each Fall to be immunized against Influenza when the new vaccines are released around Halloween. People with COPD are likely to be seriously threatened by Influenza and this risk can be minimized by the yearly shot. If you have not been immunized against pneumonia, that also should be done for the same reason; this pneumonia immunization is needed only once a decade, however.

As you know, you are overweight. If this is ever to be corrected, now is the time before harm is done. Most people find they need help. If you want help losing weight, you can call 858-573-0040 to get information about Kaiser Permanente's weight management programs at Positive Choice.

Stress incontinence is caused by stretching of the muscles of the pelvic floor, often following multiple pregnancies or obesity. As a result, the alignment of the bladder is shifted a bit and the urinary sphincters are no longer water tight. Weight loss can relieve symptoms. Certain exercises can be very helpful at relieving this type of incontinence but only if they are properly done. The paperback book, "Staying Dry," by Drs. Burgio, Pearce, and Lucco at Johns Hopkins, describes the exercises in detail. You can purchase it by phone from Johns Hopkins University Press at (410) 516-6930. The definitive treatment is pelvic surgery, but most people can get relief far more easily if they are willing to do the exercises. You might wish to join the Simon Foundation, a patient centered group, and receive a helpful newsletter and other advice about incontinence problems. They have a toll free information number at 800-237-4666, Urinary incontinence is a problem that either can be solved or managed!

The level of calcium in your blood is somewhat elevated. The reason for this is not clear and some further tests need to be done to try to figure out the cause. This has *nothing* to do with drinking milk so don't try to fix it by changing your diet. Hopefully, everything will turn out normal on re-testing.

I hope this information is useful to you. A lot of other things were done of course, but they were normal and discussed with you at the time of your visit. A letter of summary like this is an experiment on our part and I would be grateful to hear whether you consider it helpful. Please let me know, even anonymously if you wish, and tell me how you feel about the letter or the evaluation itself. You can reach me at the letterhead address or by e-mail: [VJFMDSDCA@msn.com](mailto:VJFMDSDCA@msn.com). And, if anything important was not addressed or was not adequately explained, let me know so we can get that straightened out. If you ever see a doctor outside Kaiser Permanente, such as on vacation, it might make sense to take this letter along for background information.

Lastly, I would like to make some general observations: If you will keep yourself slender, not smoke, drink alcohol only in small amounts, walk regularly, and wear seat belts, then you are likely to do more for yourself than can all of medical science. Modern medicine, after all, is designed largely to deal with the complications caused by *not* following this advice. Should you wish to do anything further, it would be to take daily one capsule of multivitamins with minerals. It would be appropriate to come back to Health Appraisal in about a year, barring anything new. The problem now is not so much what is going on as what you are going to do about what is going on. You have my best wishes for success in that regard.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vincent J. Felitti MD". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the letters "Vincent" and "Felitti" being more prominent. The "MD" is written in a smaller, simpler font at the end of the signature.

Vincent J. Felitti, MD