

## Kilpatrick

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those drugs found to be (1) safe and (2) effective. Abundant anecdotal evidence now attests tacrine's effectiveness. For some victims it works. I am hearing from their families. The drug may not work for every Alzheimer's victim, but it works for them. In a few cases the improvement is described as "stunning" or "almost unbelievable."

Tacrine appears also to be relatively safe. Preliminary data indicate liver damage in some patients, but in every test case the damage has proved to be reversible.

The story of tacrine, or Cognex, takes me back to 1974 and the story of amygdalin, or Laetrile. At the time, a good many persons suffering from terminal cancer believed Laetrile gave them relief. A furious controversy developed between the scientific establishment and the desperate patients.

In California, a doctor actually was sent to jail for six months for prescribing Laetrile. On appeal he won a resounding decision in California's Fourth District, where Judge Robert Staniforth said: "So long as there is no clear evidence that Laetrile is unsafe to the user, I believe each individual patient has a right to obtain the substance from a licensed physician who feels it appropriate to prescribe it to him..."

"The issue here is human liberty. Can the informed cancer-ridden patient be limited in choice of treatment to 'state sanctioned' alternatives? ... The right to control one's own body is not restricted to the wise; it includes the 'foolish' refusal of medical treatment."

Exactly so. And the same libertarian principles apply in the matter of tacrine. The advisory committee's coldly scientific appraisal was that Warner-Lambert's initial tests did not establish "a clinically meaningful benefit." The drug produced a small beneficial effect on a certain measure of mental function, but it had no overall effect on the patient "as assessed by a skilled observer." The company will undertake additional clinical trials, but full-scale approval of tacrine is years down the road.

The big issue is not the drug. The big issue is freedom. How far should the government go in protecting the people from what the government declares to be folly? In giving the FDA absolute power over drugs, Congress has imposed liberalism in its most evil form. The omnipotent state knows best! The law is indifferent to the fate of an individual. All must be treated alike! This is inhuman arrogance, breathtaking in its rejection of individual liberty.

In time the commotion over Laetrile subsided. Perhaps the stuff really was worthless. Perhaps the cancer victims who demanded access to the drug were foolish. But God and the Constitution have given freeborn Americans a right to be foolish. Above all, to borrow from Dr. Kessler's bureaucratic rhetoric, that right should be maintained.

## Halloween tales

Colonnades and Pegasus are inviting members of the college community to come and hear tales of terror and dread at Phantasm and Phobia, a Halloween literary happening. The event will be held Friday, October 25th at 9 p.m. in the lounge of West Hall.

## Goodman

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work, even at home. Slowly, they have won some tools of self-defense. In the shouting match of his word against hers, it is not always or only his that is heard.

Date rape, battered women's defense, sexual assault. With each modest change in attitude and law, there has been a stunning overreaction on the part of many men. Where women feel vulnerable to male assault, men feel vulnerable to a woman's accusation.

Rape is still vastly underreported. Twice as many men kill their wives as wives kill husbands. Sexual harassment remains as widespread as it is hard to prove.

Yet when a Willie Smith is arrested, how many men think: Any woman could accuse me. When a battered wife who killed her husband is granted clemency, how many think: It's open season on husbands. And when Clarence Thomas is hit with a charge, how many think: You can't even ask a girl out anymore.

In real life, false accusations are few, maybe even fewer than false acquittals. But in fantasy life, they are the "reverse discrimination" storylines of the time, the female pit bull attack on the ankle of innocent man.

Her word is not always the right one. The chore of proving in public what happened in private remains as difficult as ever. There is no assurance that airing Anita Hill's charges and Clarence Thomas' countercharges would lead to a crisp clean-cut winner.

But it was not for the all-male Senate committee to silence "her word" before it was spoken in public. At the eleventh hour and the fifty-ninth minute these senators finally heard, loud and clear, the voices of women. The women they represent.

His word, her word. This is our word to Congress: Listen up.

### Homecoming '91

Don't forget to vote for Homecoming Queen Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, October 29-31.

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