

Misconceptions about health care

The author is a local physician.

THE GUEST COLUMN

By DR. WILLARD McCLOUD JR.

Despite attempts to the contrary, health care has persisted through the ages not as a right, but a privilege.

Nowhere has this sad truth revealed itself more than in the black and minority communities.

Even with improvements, the health status of the black com-

private insurance companies
• likely to stay more than two days longer when he does go to the hospital

• likely to be confined to bed longer and to lose more time from work when he gets sick

health care providers. The percentage of blacks in U.S. medical schools has declined for the eighth straight year in spite of record increases in the total medical school enrollment.

One white physician exists for every 538 white persons, while, by contrast, there is only one black physician for every 4,100 black persons!

Political, social and economic aspects of the delivery of health care have become so intermingled that it is now impossible to separate them from the actual medical, technical or scientific aspects of the practice of medicine.

It is the above information that will not allow me to let stand the information found in an article by the Better Business Bureau in the Oct. 10 issue of the *Chronicle* entitled "Selecting a physician:

• more likely to die from eight of the 10 leading causes of death
• and likely to die six years younger than his white counterpart.

Many factors have contributed to this distressing state of affairs (e.g., lack of information and access to care.) Critical, however, is the inadequate number of black

munity remains in a dismal state. In comparison with his white counterpart, a black person still is:

- more likely to die in infancy
- more likely to lose his mother during childbirth
- less likely to go to the hospital when taken ill
- less likely to be covered by

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Don't mention Falwell and Jackson in the same breath

To The Editor:

Robin Adams is a fine journalist who has added much to the excellence of the *Winston-Salem Chronicle* and its primary coverage of the black community.

She is fair-minded, quick-witted and personally equipped as a capable, conscientious, hard-working professional. However, the ending to her recent article on her trip to Lynchburg, Va., to see the head of Thomas Road Baptist Church (Jerry Falwell) contained



Ability isn't the only criterion." I must say that I agreed with the opening paragraph 100 percent which stated that, while the primary criteria for selecting a physician should be his or her technical skills, capabilities and training, other important factors such as the doctor's accessibility, temperament and ability to communicate with the patient also

should be considered.

However, the rest of the article was filled with errors and personal opinions with which some will agree and others will disagree.

In responding to the above article, I was torn as to answering purely from the standpoint of being a physician or a physician who happens to be black.

However, when the Better Business Bureau issues this kind of article, some type of response is warranted to correct the errors and respond to certain points that reek of elitism and personal opinion.

The article begins by stating that there are doctors who specialize and there are several Please see page A13

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a highly inappropriate, if not downright dangerous, comment.

A remark was made to the effect that shaking Falwell's hand elicited a feeling similar in Ms. Adams to shaking the hand of the Rev. Jesse L. Jackson.

No doubt, the similarity of engaging two men with some training in Christian ministry who now influence millions of people worldwide (though of

distinctly different constituencies) is what struck Ms. Adams.

However, this lone similarity does not eliminate the impropriety of the comparison. First, the comment was inappropriate, because, even in an impressionistic article, the subjectivity of how a reporter feels when shaking someone's hand strains the bounds of journalistic credibility.

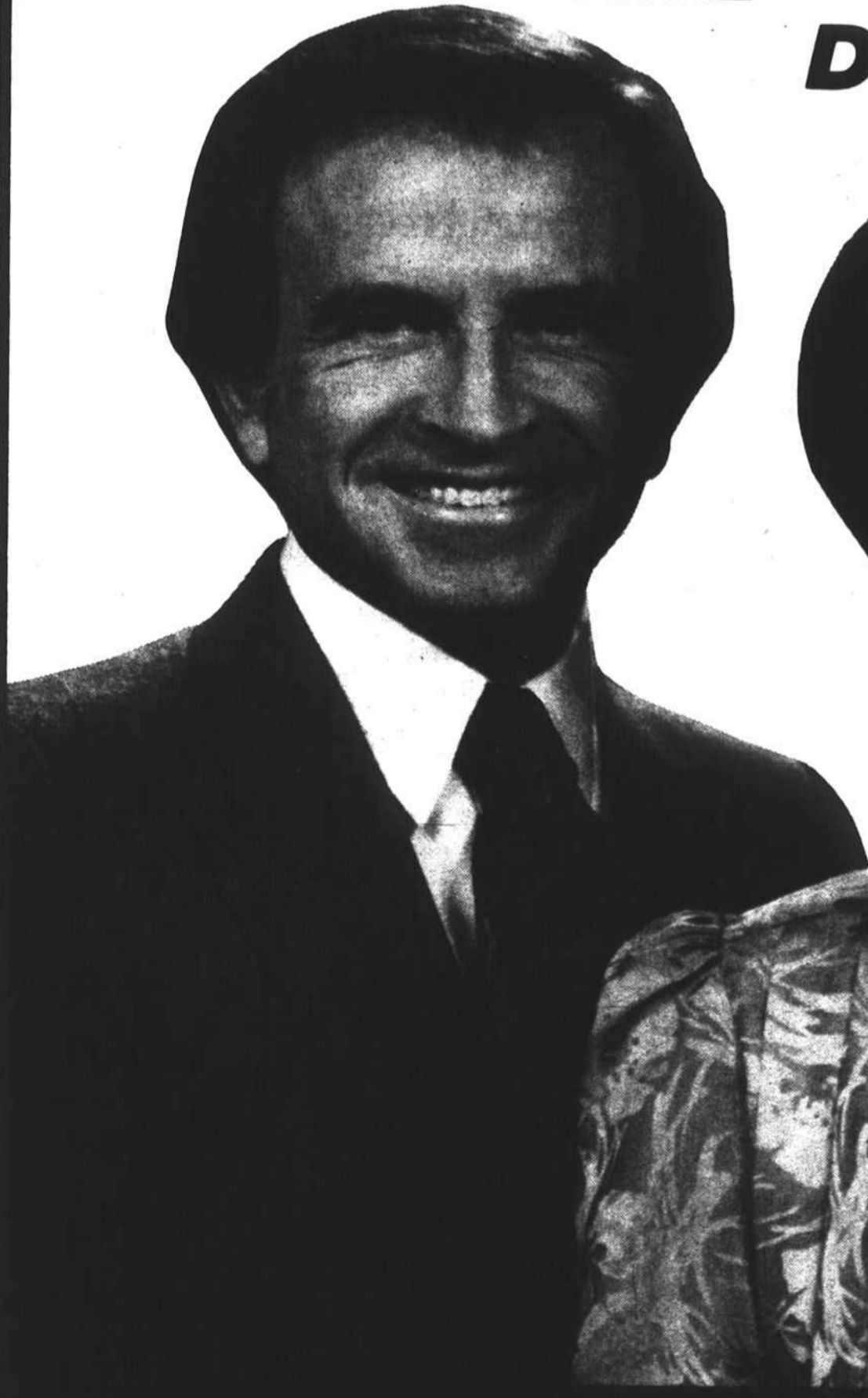
Much more importantly is the danger of believing, or even giving a glimmer of the impression that there's some substantive similarity between Jerry Falwell and Jesse Jackson.

Jackson grows out of the best of the black American religious heritage, which is biblically based in the Exodus freedom event and the social teaching of the prophets and the holistic salvation of Jesus the Christ.

Falwell grows out of the worst of the white American religious Please see page A14

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