

## Editor-in-Chief's Note

### Reflection on the Affordable Care Act (ACA) of 2010

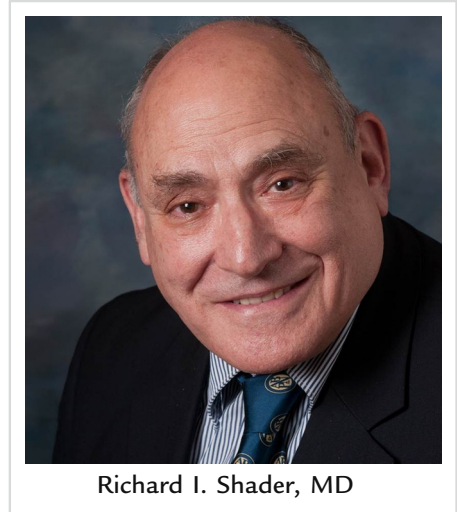
I was watching a wrecking ball smash into the side of a building that had been damaged in a recent storm. It looked so easy. A few days before, I had received my homeowner's insurance renewal and was dismayed by the price tag they gave for rebuilding our house should it need to be rebuilt in 2014. In that context, I mused about how much easier it is to tear things down than it is to build them. I began to think more broadly about what is easier; for example, how much easier it is to gain weight than to lose it, or to criticize than create, or break up a marriage than make it work. I wondered if a proverb existed to that effect. My search turned up a piece by Friar Michael Shields. I like what he said because it was so close to my own thinking: "It is easier in life to tear down than to build up—easier to destroy than create. It is easier to criticize than support a new project."<sup>1</sup>

Where is this leading? The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) of 2010 is the law of the land. Affirmed by the Supreme Court in 2012, it has moved (albeit slowly and plagued by missteps) to a state of actualization and implementation. Its launching was fraught with problems, some understandable with such a vast and unprecedented program and some the result of politically motivated interference. Although there are still snags and postponements of implementation, for the most part many Americans are now benefiting from the health care law, especially young children and those with preexisting conditions. We have come a long way from when I was in medical school in the late 1950s when there was active debate about universal health care; however, few believed it would actually happen. Organized medicine actively and vehemently opposed any efforts in that direction.

Recently, and purely by chance, I came across a 4-verse poem by the late Marya Mannes.<sup>2</sup> It was written in 1959, and I quote here only the middle 2 verses because of their current relevance. I am leaving off her first verse and part of the last verse. The first and last verses blame the American Medical Association for the problem of affordable health care. In a long-overdue turnaround, the American Medical Association has endorsed the ACA, although some physician groups still oppose it.

"Hints of government assistance meet with adamant resistance  
As their very private enterprise they jealously protect,  
While impartial health commissions who report the true conditions  
Are considered (Hippocratically) hostile and suspect.  
Making doctors' care available to many is assailable  
As socialist conspiracy designed to cut them down,  
And a citizen so luckless as to sicken – and be buckless  
Must simply fall in debt or on the mercy of the town."

Sound familiar? Shockingly so. Mannes, who died in 1990, was right on. Unfortunately, she did not live to see the passage of the ACA. Born into a family of distinguished musicians, her parents were David and Clara Mannes, founders of the Mannes College of Music in New York City. On her maternal side were the famed conductors, Leopold, Walter, and Frank Damrosch. Marya herself became an editor for *Vogue*.<sup>3,4</sup> She was best known to me for her wit and for her critical insights into life in the United States.



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I take the liberty now of adding my own last two lines (in italics) to her first 2 lines of the final verse of the poem Mannes aptly titled, “A Matter of Health.”

“Yet while angrily rejecting any efforts at correcting  
Such unfortunate lacunae in the health of the U.S.A,”  
*The policies most in need of a revamping and indeed of  
True rethinking drive those that party on as T-E-A.*

We at *Clinical Therapeutics* strive to provide to our clinician/scientist audience unbiased, data-driven research, as well as informed commentaries and opinion pieces. We hope, in turn, that our readers will utilize the information we provide to improve clinical care and research planning and execution and will encourage their political representatives to support affordable and available health care to people in need around the world.

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## REFERENCES

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