

ASIDE TO PATIENTS

HOW TO SCORE OPIATES

Arrive late for your appointment, after 5pm, when the waiting area is full. Be loud and aggressive to the staff. Claim to have a taxi waiting outside. Flick ash on the "Please do not smoke" sign. Annoy other patients by taking an over friendly interest in the children in the waiting room or better still, sit next to an elderly, innocent-looking woman and tell her your horrific story of pain, prostitution, etc. A further masterstroke is to start dry retching and call out for a kidney dish. Appalling children, trained to destroy waiting rooms and disenchant patients, augment the show.

You will more than likely be next to see the doctor!

Limp into the consulting room. Greet the doctor by using his first name. Claim that the doctor comes highly recommended for his compassion. Pull your chair around so you are confronting the doctor with your knees touching his. Smell a bit. Eat garlic, and have a bit of dog poo on the soles of your shoe.

Give your history. Have an exotic incurable disease – for example, a tropical illness like schistosomiasis (and know how to pronounce it properly) or cancer or hydrocephalus or AIDS. Claim to have the medical profession baffled. Alternatively, have a chronic pain syndrome – for example, botched surgery, staghorn calculus of the kidney, an inflamed stump, or a chronic discharging sinus. It is best that injuries were suffered during service for your country or for humanity in some way.

Alternate demeanour between aggression and pathos and, of course, be on an Invalid Pension.

Convince the doctor you are making a "one-off" request for help – for example, say you are from interstate, visiting your dying mother, or have an appointment with a pain clinic in the next day or so, or claim that your usual doctor is away or sick (a professor or knighted doctor is by far the best). Stating that you are wanting to get better, for the kids, and having a photo of a homely spouse and smiling children is worth a try.

Then ask. Request the maximum number of your opiate of choice. Use generic names like "dextromoramide" instead of "Palfium", or "oxycodone pectinate" instead of "Proladone". Mispronouncing the name of the drug (like "Ken Done" for "Endone") is old-fashioned. Claim to be allergic to all other drugs. Have an up-to-date MIMS and, of course, an up-to-date Pharmaceutical Benefits "blue book". Reject the suggestion of an intramuscular injection as you may well get sterile water.

If the script is completed, check that the dose and amount are written in letters and figures to comply with the legislation.

If the script is refused, support your story with documentation. Pluck, from an old travel bag, a thick wad of grubby notes. Include specialists' reports, x-ray results, pain clinic referrals, and so on. Insist that the doctor reads the lot. Have x-rays ready, and point out the stone, lesions, cavitations, etc; use medical terminology. Of course, since it is after 5 p.m., confirmation of all this is impossible.

If the script is still refused, move from your history to your examination. For example, tear the dirty bandage from the ulcer or inflamed stump, enucleate your artificial eye and push the weeping socket under the doctor's nose, lay bare the surgical wounds, remove your hat to reveal the alopecia due to your chemotherapy (having shaved scalp with an electric shaver to avoid nicks). Better still, express pus from that old sinus, and wipe away with a handkerchief. Have a small fit and warn the doctor that you have much bigger ones when withdrawing.

Never accept scripts of lesser drugs like codeine or benzodiazepines. This gives the doctor an "honourable out" and anyway, these drugs are readily available from many local doctors.

If the script is still refused, start to apply some pressure! Claim to be already suing other general practitioners for malpractice, for not treating your pain seriously. Claim that the Medical Board is involved. Know the name of the secretary of the Board and the phone number; quote these. Give the doctor your lawyer's business card and ask the doctor what medical insurance company he is covered by. Mention the local Member of Parliament by name and claim that person fully supports your cause. Claim to be on close terms with Derryn Hinch.

If the script is still refused, use your special trump cards. Have a *grand mal* fit or threaten the doctor with violence or threaten to rush into the waiting room and claim to have been sexually molested by the doctor, or threaten to damage property (for example, the cars in the doctor's car park). The doctor will most likely mention the police. Claim to know all the local police and insist that they are always sympathetic to your cause.

If all else fails for example, if the doctor claims that he is an addict himself and the Medical Board has barred him from prescribing Schedule 8 drugs then: (1) tear up the Medicare form; (2) tell the doctor he is an (expletive deleted) and you are going to sue him; (3) slam and split the door; (4) "bad mouth" the doctor to the people in the waiting room; (5) slam the outer door and damage same.

Depart in waiting taxi to the next surgery in the street.