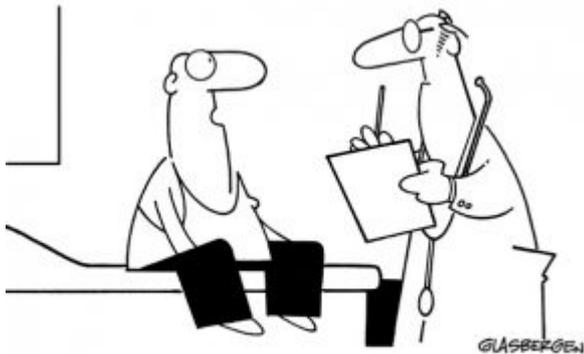


I'm too young or too healthy to watch cable news



"I have a question about my medication. Why is the couple in the commercial sitting outdoors in separate bathtubs?"

I must admit, I've been somewhat magnetized to the news over the past several months. And while it's maddening the number of channels there are out there, I've whittled my flipping between CNN, MSNBC and FOX.

There is some repetitiveness to the reporting, of course, even given the widely disparate viewpoints of those three cable networks. But they do all agree on one thing.

All their viewers must be old and symptomatic.

Now, as the grateful son of two still-living parents in their upper 80's, I'm well-versed in the seemingly endless prescriptive suggestions from doctors to older individuals. Seeing the pillbox my Stepmom brings with her on our lunches is awareness enough of the preponderance of pharmaceuticals in our elderly population's lives.

But, good gosh, the commercials that proliferate through all these news programs!

You know the basic structure of most of them – somebody shown either suffering or happy, then you are told what will help them or has helped them, then you get an enormous ream of side effects, and then everyone is shown as happy at the end.

Occasionally, there's the doctor portrayal (almost always with the white coat and more than seems logical with a stethoscope either neck-draped or jutting out of the coat pocket).

Sometimes, there's the extended family, but almost always there's some partner or companion involved.

Which, of course, leads into the multiple "special moment" commercials. Those are always so suggestive, it's hard to decide whether it's an ED medicine or an aphrodisiac.

Let's not forget the multiple times I'm urged to reverse mortgage my home (by famous 80's actors!) or the many lawyers who show up to tell me I deserve more money. And, finally, I've been advised many times about what to own if I fall down and can't get up.

There are rare ads about cars and food, but mostly, it's about being sick and old and running out of money. Is it any wonder the news shows are so sensationalist? It must be what the advertisers want.

As a former advertising man, I know most of this is dictated by the demographics. I'm watching the news during the day, which means the expected audience is going to be skewed older. But, geez, can that much incessant repetition really be that impactful?

Maybe I would know better if I weren't too young or healthy to be interested in what they're trying to sell.