

When Self-Righteousness Was for the Best

Category: A Turn for the Better

written by Jeral Williams | February 5, 2026

Some years ago, during my annual physical, my doctor suggested I change to a less expensive blood pressure medicine. I was hesitant. He suggested a 30-day trial; if I didn't like the new drug, he said, I could switch back to my old one. I agreed.

After the 30-day trial, I wanted to return to my old prescription. I believed that I'd had better cognitive functioning on the previous medication. So I called my doctor's office and asked for a renewal of the old prescription. I was informed that my doctor had left the practice. I was surprised by the departure but repeated my request for the previous prescription.

I was then informed I first had to establish a relationship with a new doctor. I protested and pointed out that my former doctor had promised I could get my old prescription back after 30 days. My plea fell on unsympathetic ears.

So I arrived at my appointment feeling irritated, self-righteously assuming the visit was unnecessary. The nurse greeted me with a puzzled look and a question: "What are you doing here?" she said. "You were just here 30 days ago."

My voice dripping with arrogance, I informed her, "Your office said you could not refill my prescription until I established a relationship with a new doctor. So here I am."

When the doctor arrived, he was puzzled and asked the same question the nurse had. My self-righteousness skyrocketed. I assured him that it was *not* my idea, that I needed a personal relationship with him to renew my prescription.

Anyway, I self-righteously decided that if we were going to have a relationship, we should get up close and personal. My prostate-specific antigen (PSA) level had always been low, but I'd recently read that people my age should have a rectal examination in addition to a PSA test. So I asked to him perform a rectal exam.

He agreed. Near the end of it, he found a small hard spot. He said he didn't believe it was a problem but recommended a biopsy.

When the biopsy results came back, they revealed an early-stage aggressive cancer. I had it removed and recently celebrated 20 years without a recurrence.

I dislike self-righteousness in myself or others. However, I have often reflected with thanksgiving that this one time, my self-righteousness had a

positive result. Without the “unnecessary” appointment, the cancer would have developed for 11 more months until my next annual physical.

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