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DOCTORING BY TELEPHONE.

(Philadelphia Medical Journal.)

We heard a doctor complain recently that one of his patients, in order presumably to save his time, sometimes called him up on the telephone when she wanted him to give advice about the baby. The good dame would sit at the other end of the wire, pencil in hand, and ask the unfortunate doctor to dictate his instructions while she took them down. This continued until one day she asked him to dictate his prescription. At this he rebelled. He was willing to take the baby's temperature and pulse by telephone, and even to inspect the character of the dejections; he was even willing to tell all he knew about babies in general and about that baby in particular; he did not even object for a while to give the lady the full benefit of a professional call and charge it as an office visit; but his conscience smote him when it came to dictating a Latin prescription by telephone and having the thrifty-minded housewife sign his name to it before her own initials.

Some physicians should write a chapter on the medical ethics of the telephone. We would do it ourselves if we felt capable. There are two sides to the question. The patient sometimes gets the better of the doctor and saves a fee, but the doctor sometimes gets the better of the patient and saves himself a lot of trouble. It is obvious in either case the patient should pay for it. But the question arises. What should he pay? The advice is given in the office, but it is received in the house. This is somewhat of a metaphysical quandary. Should a doctor charge an office fee for giving advice that goes straight to the patient's bedside? On the other hand, should a patient be obliged to pay a house fee for advice which a doctor gives sitting comfortably in his office. The problem is full of difficulties. Perhaps it would be best to call it half-and-half, and charge accordingly.

A man should die as unconscious of his death as he is of his birth. We all sleep through the processes of birth, and feel the painful or unpleasant impressions of life only after awakening.

Death is a painless process, and when the cycle of life is completed the living being sleeps into it. The natural and easy descent into oblivion is the sequel of health; it is the happy death engrafted on the perfect life. Death should be divested of all fear, sorrow and suffering, and should come to us at last as a quiet sleep.—O. A. Palmer, M.D.