



Scary Porches, Scarier Doctors

In news from the world of universal health care, Mark Wattson, 35, collapsed in pain in the street in Swindon, England, a month after he had his appendix removed.

He was rushed by ambulance to Great Western Hospital, the place where his appendectomy was done and where doctors had released him after assurances that all went well. This time, Mr. Wattson was told by the same team of doctors that his supposedly removed appendix had burst and that he needed to be readmitted for an emergency appendectomy.



"I couldn't believe what I was hearing," said Wattson. "I told these people I had my appendix out just four weeks earlier but there it was on the screen for all to see. I thought: 'What the hell did they slice me open for in the first place?'"

More trouble developed after Wattson's second operation. The incision made during the operation became infected, leaving a hole in his stomach, 1.6 inches deep by 1.2 inches wide. Treatment required an additional six days in the hospital.

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While bouncing back and forth to the hospital, Wattson lost his part-time job at a sports shop. "I had a temporary job, but when I took in two medical certificates saying I had my appendix out twice they didn't believe me."

So now he's jobless — and still in pain. And wondering what the surgeons removed the first time. "Now I'm helpless. I can't go out and find a job, I can't go to interviews. I can barely walk and am in constant pain."

In other universal health care news, the December 2009 issue of *Reason* magazine reports that government inspectors working for the Stoke City Council in England "warned residents to remove welcome mats and potted plants from their porches."

With government running health care, it becomes the state's business if someone trips over a porch plant or welcome mat, or if some numbskull runs into a hanging basket.

And what about sled riding, something more likely than a potted palm to raise hospital costs?

In a nation that can't stomach the risk of a welcome mat, how long will people be permitted to ice skate or race cars? Will kids still be allowed to build snowmen, given the danger of frostbite and subsequent medical interventions?

So what will be the allowable winter sport in England, given the need to cut the level of red ink in health budgets? Stay inside and bake gingerbread people? Still risky. To make 30 little gingerpeople, just 2.5 inches tall, Betty Crocker says to use a full cup of packed brown sugar, 1.5 cups of dark molasses, 7 cups of flour, and 1/3 cup of shortening, plus cinnamon, allspice, cloves and ginger.



Written by [Ralph R. Reiland](#) on November 17, 2009

There's also frosting — 4 more cups of sugar, powdered, plus vanilla and some raisins and chocolate chips for the faces and buttons.

That comes to 270 calories per gingerperson. Eat the whole batch (they're small) and that's 8,100 calories, enough to become the business of the obesity cops and the central committee's watchers of budget busters in the health sector.

On top of fat, there's also the gingerperson's fuel squandering and its link to climate calamities and drowning polar bears, with ginger, cloves, and cinnamon, respectively, coming from half a warming world away in India, Madagascar, and Sri Lanka.

I think we're all going to end up in nerdmobiles with broccoli sandwiches, boring porches, lousy doctors and double appendectomies.

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