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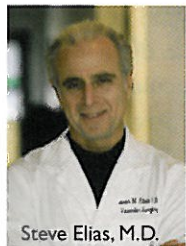
**Tort Reform**  
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# Free Ride Home

by Steve Elias, M.D., FACS



.....but what a story he told me, one pointed and resonant. It took me a year to understand....:

*“Patrol went up to the mountain. One man came back.*

*He died before he could tell us what happened.*

*I waited for the rest of the story but it seemed not to be that type of story”.*

So writes Michael Herr a journalist during the Vietnam War in his book *Dispatches*. He states it is the shortest but most poignant story about war that he ever heard during his time in Vietnam. Why?

It took me a while but I believe it is about wasted actions, wasted lives and no one benefiting from anyone’s experience. The next patrol that goes up the mountain still doesn’t know what to expect.

Last time in this column we heard from AVF members, this time it is members of industry. Some of them have climbed a mountain and returned. Some are starting up the mountain.

We brought them together to share their experience so that we may all benefit and get an idea about what is happening now regarding their views of venous disease and educational support in our changing and challenging landscape. Our participants included: Nina Davis, President of CoolTouch, Inc.; Meg Heim, Vice President of Marketing, BioMedix Vascular Solutions, Inc.; Tom Musone, Director of Marketing, Julius Zorn (Juzo), Inc., and Scott Cramer, VP of Strategic and GlobalMarketing, Vascular Therapies Division, Covidien, Inc. A recap of our discussion follows.

**Question #1** How has the current economic climate impacted which tools and mediums you do and don’t support in terms of venous education?

**Tom:** Within our business segment, we are still seeing tremendous growth, which is fortunate for us in this economic climate. As a result, from a marketing

standpoint, we have continued to invest more in venous education. Our market includes the growing baby boomers - and greater awareness of our products is key to this continued growth.

**Nina:** The economy and credit crunch has affected larger ticket items such as the lasers we sell, so we have had to scale back a bit and pick and choose. Phlebology is a very important market to us, so we still invest in this area but are doing so in a more controlled fashion.

**Meg:** Our trade show schedule has changed and we are now looking to dig deeper into which conferences will give us the greatest impact. We are spending the same and still attending the same number of shows but we are approaching it differently. We are looking at attendance, ROI figures and who is actually at the meetings. As an example, we may attend the same meeting from last year but sponsor specific break out sessions versus the overall conference.

**Scott:** Vascular Therapies within Covidien is growing rapidly. We are looking to support as many educational activities as possible keeping in mind the crossover many shows have and the increasing costs for the show and the personnel to staff the shows. Covidien is also looking into more educational symposiums in conjunction with trade show activity.

Kenneth Snelson’s, Free Ride Home  
1974-80, aluminum & stainless steel



**Summary from Elias:** You are each looking to get biggest bang for your buck in terms of supporting conferences – both in terms of which you support and how you support them. It is interesting that Tom has seen growth despite our economy. He is selling a non-procedure product. The others are making some tactical decisions

**Question #2** We all agree that phlebology is still on a growth curve. That being said, how are restrictions with Advamed, pharma, etc impacting how you can invest your educational dollars?

**Meg:** Even though we are not a member of Advamed, we follow the guidelines. We are channeling our support through physician organizations. Everyone still needs support, but we are redirecting it through these organizations so it's clear and appropriate without ambiguity.

**Tom:** Some of the policies being put in place are just common sense and so we are really just continuing to follow our normal course of business. These controls really haven't changed our decision-making in terms of marketing investments.

**Scott:** Covidien is an Advamed member and we insist on following the guidelines set forth. Advamed is not restricting the flow of funds, just how those funds are allocated and to insure it is 100% for education purposes. One big switch is meeting locations. Resort locations do cause a conflict with some guidelines.

**Nina:** We have always taken the high road and don't try to push the envelope. We try to respect physicians' accomplishments and then do what is proper and falls within maintaining good, strong ethics.

**Summary from Elias:** As we know, laws are established for those who are more likely to break them. As Dylan states, "To live above the law you must be honest." Clearly, most companies are doing the right thing. It's the few that aren't that need these controls but it sounds like each of you have been taking the right approach and taking the high road already.

**Nina:** It actually levels the playing field for those that have always taken the high road.

**Elias:** Agreed. That's an excellent point. These restrictions actually benefit everyone by leveling the playing field for the industry players that are already doing the right thing.

**Question #3** What initiatives have each of your companies undertaken to educate the public about venous disease?

**Tom:** We support the AVF National Screening program. We also run a campaign in March, a cross-promotion with dealers to promote DVT awareness. Since we work with dealers in home medical equipment (HME), pharmacy and durable medical equipment (DME), it gives us a large network to tap into for patient education

**Nina:** We support the ACP Foundation, which has a charter to educate the public. That is our way to support outreach to the consumer. As a small privately held company, this allows us to make an impact on public outreach with our size and resources.

**Meg:** We are a member of the Venous Disease Foundation and the Venous Disease Coalition. Working with the Coalition is very important, because we offer a complete venous education guide to each of our clients. It is a turnkey program with outreach to patients, hospitals and the community, and allows us to co-brand specific materials.

**Scott:** We support the ACP Foundation, as well as the AVF in many ways. We are actively working on informational websites that talk about the disease state, provide guidelines for physicians and as an organization we are committed to educating the public.

**Summary from Elias:** Venous disease is a self-diagnosed disease. You are all supporting it through major venous organizations and affiliations with your specific company. You seem to agree that supporting third party groups to advance phlebology education and science is key. It also gives you an opportunity to work side-by-side with your competition for the common end goal of education.

**Question #4** Do you segment out who you support educationally? Do you separate out, for example, new practitioners, versus an established practitioner transitioning to a vein care from another specialty? In other words, if you had limited dollars, would you segment out how much you support these different types of vein practitioners?

**Meg:** Newer physicians have been trained in new ideas and techniques versus seasoned practitioners who have been practicing medicine for 25 years. Really, if you are savvy, you can market to both of these groups separately and effectively. It's easiest to reach newer physicians by marketing to them electronically, which is much cheaper if you have limited resources. Veteran established practitioners need to be targeted with trade shows, conferences and networking.

**Scott:** As the vein world continues to develop, we are seeing doctors both young and old want to learn new things and become involved. We are offering tools that can be used by anyone regardless of experience level. An example is our course offerings where we see all experience levels signing up.

**Tom:** Juzo has online learning programs to help physicians learn about our products and services. We view the future of the venous disease market as very bright and want to continue to build ties with medical professionals who are entering into this category. What we bring is our expertise in compression. We'll take new practitioners on a tour, and show them the technology behind compression stockings; the doctors find this really interesting.

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