

I looked around the dank room. Sniffles and coughs. I'll get another flu soon and nothing fixes them. The room is covered in a kind of carpet on the walls. It's grey and menacing, like the mould hanging from the sides of a winery's tunnels he once saw where the champagne was stored underground. Waiting rooms were a fact of life for a drug rep and they were as varied as the doctors he had to pretend to be pally with.

This was not a nice room. The doctor was not a nice doctor. Well, at least not to reps. Maybe if I was one of the good-looking young women they were hiring I could get away with it. I recall a friendlier doctor than this one telling him that as a resident in a hospital, most male specialists were only civil to good looking young lady residents. Most companies had realised that male doctors suffered mid life crises as soon as they graduated and realised they'd wasted their lives and female doctors love to chat. So the young women scored on both counts. They were nurses sick of wiping bums, teachers sick of children, OT's sick of old people, solicitors sick of life, no-one wanted to be a rep unless they had a worse job first. The women were good at the job though. After all nursing involved a lot of being nice to unlovable doctors.

The entry in my diary for this doctor is not encouraging. My predecessor had a neatly typed note to the effect that this doctor was well known for his strong opinions. Over this was scrawled in crayon, "The Horror". Surely over dramatic he thought until he saw him himself. Other reps had told of being thrown out for not bringing a fancy enough gift. It would do no good to tell him there were rules about these things. And the company checked whether you'd seen him so there was no escaping the encounter.

My own notes read "better to agree with whatever he says and get out alive." It surprises me that he sees reps at all if he hated them all so much, but the toys were his weak spot. They were only rubbish, but this doctor liked toys.

Imagine waiting  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour to see someone who hated your trade. Today I have pens, a calculator that predicted whether you'd survive the next ten years, an invitation to dinner, and a competition that you couldn't lose at for a better toy than could be given under the guidelines on inducements.

These guidelines imagine that doctors can be influenced by gifts and meals to favour one brand over another. This under estimated the cynicism of doctors by several degrees of magnitude. Your average doctor would delight in taking the hospitality of one company while always prescribing its competitor. They call it independence. I call it inscutable.

Doctors prescribing habits are not rational enough to be influenced by logical things like brand loyalty and bribery. I know one doctor who won't prescribe anything that begins with Z. Zantac, Zoton. Zyrtec, Zyprexa. He won't even prescribe Xanax because he can't spell either. Many use whatever brand has the least letters in the name.

An hour late.

There aren't many people here so I'm being made to wait deliberately.

You got two minutes says the receptionist as I hurry in. The presentation which cost \$110 000 to produce and is played on my notebook computer takes five. I'd better leave it hidden in case he claims it.

Drug one . Never use it. Strike.

Drug two Killed the first person I put it on. Really its just another brand of panadol after all. Yes he shouldn't have taken all three boxes at once, but that's hardly the drugs fault. I didn't say that last bit.

Drug three Use it myself wonderful stuff There go all my samples. Oh well, at least I'll get another appointment.

Gets question wrong, give him toy anyway.

At this point I'm supposed to use logic to suggest that with the efficacy and safety of this product he really couldn't use anything else for this indication and make the doctor feel guilty if he doesn't use my drug. Not f-ing likely here. I used this tactic on one doctor who broke down as if it I'd applied some terrifying psychological torture sobbing that he was under so much pressure already and he was going to kill himself. Used here I could be killed, but of course usual doctors cannot be manipulated like that. You need more subtle techniques and copious alcohol. I only do that sort of thing when the supervisor are riding shot gun. Otherwise agree with anything. Make them feel clever. Give them toys and samples.

Leave

Get new appointment. Asked for more samples of the drug. It is expensive and habit forming and not a good drug at all really. I get them from the car.