

~~This is Dan Price for community comment.~~

Personally, I have few medical complaints: For most of my adult life I have had health insurance, a Family doctor or GP, access to referrals or specialists when I needed them. And I can thank the Good Lord for basically good health—with a few ~~little~~ ^{minor} exceptions here and there, that did not seem so little at the time. But, I *hear* complaints from those who live in Humboldt County about access and quality of medical care. I also hear and know about physicians who have left Humboldt for various reasons: Not enough money to be made here compared to the suburbs and cities; geographic isolation; the gray and cloudy skies, insurance companies, paper work and malpractice have become a big pain in the ~~petal~~ ^{rear}. ~~Occasionally, a physician or their spouse~~ ^{can} ~~dislike our north coast region.~~ I get it, I guess. If you need to be near a big city, Humboldt is not your place. Personally, I like to be as far from a big city as I can, so Humboldt is my haven.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist, or ~~MD~~ ^{me}, to see that good quality medical care is crucial to our region because we are ~~isolated and are~~ getting more and more retirees, equity emigrants and drought refugees coming north. But, if they can't get good medical care, they won't come, and that would be a bad thing for our economy and especially housing prices.

My best guesstimate is that we have somewhere over 200 physicians practicing in our county: so let's conservatively say 200 docs for 120,000 people. ~~True, we are starving for specialists in areas like orthopedics and gynecology.~~ But if you think we've got it bad this might help bring a bit of perspective. Imagine a place where there ~~are~~ ^{is} not one hospital that even begins to approach St. Joseph Hospital, or Mad River, in cleanliness, supplies and accessibility. Imagine a population of 750,000 people with one physician. Imagine a place where war has raged almost non-stop for over 27 years: a place where people routinely beat swords into plowshares (well, the swords are mostly in the form of bomb casings). That is exactly the case in the Nuba mountains of Sudan where Dr. Tom Catena practices. He runs the Mother of Mercy Hospital in war-torn Sudan with a great deal of devotion to his Catholic faith and the Nuban people. As a result of the war, People struggle to survive amid ground fighting, aerial bombardment and starvation-warfare waged by their government. ~~From what I read,~~ Humanitarian organizations are *prohibited* from delivering aid. Dr. Catena practices medicine anyway. He works tirelessly, day and night, treating all ailments, war injuries and starvation. ...

Andrew Berends, ~~who~~ ^{has} produced a movie about the Nuban people, called Madina's Dream, In it he interviews Dr. Catena, and says this about his work:

"He tells me his greatest reward is the sense of peace that comes from serving people in need, rebels and civilians alike. In spite of the hardship, he is exactly where he wants to be."

What a wonderful world it would be, if physicians, and all of us, like Dr. Catena, were less concerned about the bottom line, and a lot more concerned about serving where we are needed?

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