



## Here's to a broader view

By Ken Winkles – August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013

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What a coincidence.

Thursday's Skagit Valley Herald, which reported on the well-attended community forum about our local hospitals' search for a larger partner, also ran Nat Hentoff's column criticizing Obamacare.

Seems that everyone from Skagit County to the libertarian Cato Institute is worried about medicine's future.

Universal concern about rapid changes in the medical-industrial complex is understandable. Extraordinary advances in medical technology and technique, the sheer size of institutions created to treat 150 more million people than when baby boomers were children, the complexities of competing insurance systems, and especially our health care's extortionate expense combine to render today's medicine very different from our father's.

Nat Hentoff claims it's[sic] Obamacare's fault. By affording access to millions of the formerly uninsured, he says, Obamacare will force patients into ever-larger systems that will not provide the personal care the insured once received when they visited their local doctor.

But sheer size is a given of our century. The hospital, clinic and insurance company mergers that began long before Obamacare attest to it. Unless we agree that providing fewer services for fewer people is the ideal we want, we're stuck with the Big Medicine that Mr. Hentoff doesn't like.

Our hospitals' challenge is to manage sensibly medicine's inevitable growth by seeking an alliance that will provide efficient and complete medical services for more people.

That means an arrangement that will not only assure financial stability and better treatment, but will include services the Catholic Church proscribes. Nothing is more personal than the choices surrounding birth and death, and those choices are ours, not a church's, to make.

Fortunately, neither Mr. Hentoff's simplistic view of history nor the Catholic Church's narrow beliefs are in charge of our medical future.

Our hospital boards are. May their vision be as broad as our beautiful Skagit Valley.