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Looking for breakthroughs

Rosemary was incredulous when she heard at a cocktail party that there was no cure for her neighbor's illness, and that even relieving her symptoms would be difficult. Her first reaction was to suggest changing doctors, which is what she does with her tradesmen when service is wanting. Had she not, after all, heard every morning while listening to Schubert in the car the advertisement that the doctors at the Miracle University Hospitals were right at the cutting edge of science and were discovering new cures for cancer every day? They were now even offering a special on heart screens, for only \$45, with a 12 lead electrocardiogram and a test for cholesterol thrown in. Had not the First Lady said that perpetual good health was a universal right, and that the greedy rich refusing to pay taxes were the only remaining obstacles in the way?

Actually Rosemary was so taken with the idea of trading in cattle futures and turning one thousand dollars into one hundred thousand that she took out a subscription to the Wall Street Journal. She also likes to read the New York Times, because it publishes the full text of speeches and calls everybody Mister and not just Jones. Then she also subscribes to the Chicago Tribune for its local news and pretty colored pictures. But deep down she is interested in medical breakthroughs, and between these three papers and the Miracle University on the way to work she has plenty to choose from. She is particularly interested in genes, something close to the very nature of life. In her bedroom she has a full size map of the human genome hanging on the wall. She has also enrolled for a summer non-credit course on in situ hybridization for housewives at the above mentioned university (comes with a free full chromosome check up for your cat and three weeks' supply of cutting edge antioxidant cat food).

Rosemary has read all about Lou Gehrig's disease and has practiced calling it amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. She has heard about brain transplants for Parkinson's disease and about lipoprotein(a). She knows about genes to diagnose and treat cancers, shrink tumors, or help manage primary hypercholesterolemia, hyperactivity, Huntington's disease, hereditary immune deficiency, leukemia, and muscular dystrophy. She finds something new every day - new drugs for multiple sclerosis, new growth factors for Parkinson's disease, new understanding of how the brain works, new hormones, antibodies, antioxidants, monoclonal antibodies "bearing lethal warheads of radiation energy." She drinks red wine and takes an aspirin a day after running three miles and doing her aerobics. She reads about folic acid preventing birth defects and enzymes that combat cocaine addiction, and is inundated with daily news about progress in AIDS, leukemia, colon and breast cancer, prostate disease, impotence, sterility, cytokines, antisense molecules, and stunning new surgical techniques. How come then, she asks, that so many people are still walking about with their illnesses unhealed? Should she write to the First Lady and complain? Or should she telephone the Miracle University Hospitals, as the ad between Schubert lieder suggests?