

**This Won't Hurt**  
**By Jerry Peterson**  
**www.jerrypetersonbooks.com**

I should have known I was in trouble when I couldn't find the front door to the clinic. I parked in the front parking lot – wouldn't you? – and got out and looked for the door. There wasn't one, just a wall of windows. Open one and climb in?

No, so I went around to the side. Yes, there were double doors there, but no sign that said this is the entrance. So on I went, around to the back, and, sure enough, there half way down the back wall was the front entrance.

A kindly woman at a computer greeted me. She took my information and typed it in, then asked, "How do you wish to pay for the vaccination?"

"Medicare," I said.

"Then I'll need your card. Do you have it with you?"

I brought out my wallet and sorted through the collection I keep there. After a few moments, I held out a card. "How about this one?" I asked.

She shook her head. "That's a Piggly Wiggly."

"Okay, my library card then?"

No.

"Ace Hardware?"

Huh-uh.

I continued to sort. And there it was, the 38th card – the next to last one in my wallet.

She was so happy she gave me a Tootsie Pop for a reward.

Angela – that was the name on her ID badge – tapped away at her keyboard, entering the Medicare information. When done, she handed my card back and two forms. "If you'll fill these out, you'll be next," she said and pointed me toward a line of chairs.

Most of the questions on the first form went this way: "Are you allergic to . . ." and listed something – a dozen items, most I'd never heard of.

A nurse with a big needle hailed me into the shot room, double doors at the end. Ahh, those double doors. She scanned down the first form and asked, "How about these?" She pointed to the items I hadn't checked.

"I don't know what they are," I said.

"Well, I'll mark that you aren't allergic to any of them."

"Let me ask," I said, "should I also be getting the swine flu shot?"

She studied my gray hair. "You're so far down the priority list you'll be dead before we get to you. Roll up your sleeve, please."

I did as she requested, and she clucked her tongue.

Had I done something wrong?

"No. Your sleeve's too tight. You can't get it high enough. You'll have to strip."

What?

"Strip. Get your shoulder out where I can get at it."

Oh.

I took off my shirt, and she swabbed my shoulder with bleach water. Then she brought out her syringe.

I stared at the needle, at the flecks of rust on it.

"Old one?" I asked.

“Well, you know how the economy is. We’ve had to cut costs, so we don’t throw needles away anymore. We dip ’em in Pine-Sol and keep shooting.”

Armed, she lunged at me. Just before she struck, the double doors whanged open. That startled her, and she dropped the syringe.

An elderly couple stepped in. They looked a bit sheepish when they realized their mistake. “This isn’t the front door, is it?” the woman said.

Nurse Dale scooped up her weapon, wiped the needle on her lab coat. “No, but just come on through. You want to go down the hall to the front door at the back. That’s where you start.”

They stopped in front of me and watched with interest as Nurse Dale plunged the needle into my shoulder. I grimaced because it felt like she’d shot a brick in there.

I didn’t see the blood when she pulled the needle out, but the man did. He fainted.

Nurse Dale glanced at him, sprawled on the floor, then at his wife. “Ma’am, leave him there,” she said. “He’s next.”