

Dr. Hotz to Dr. Reed

Down in the swampy, piney regions of southern Georgia, people who could never before afford a doctor's care are being treated by a network of practitioners who have decided that helping people is more important than making \$180,000 a year.

Ten years ago, one newly graduated young cardiologist, James Hotz, (who became the subject of a film, *Doc Hollywood*, starring Michael J. Fox) agreed to spend two years in urban Athens, Georgia, before going off to earn his fortune in a major city. While en route to Athens, Hotz and his wife were literally hijacked by car and driven 200 miles south to rural Leesburg. The townspeople there were desperate for a doctor; like many small towns in the area, they hadn't had an established doctor in the area for over a decade before his arrival. Three doctors tried to establish practices during that time, but all failed within six months. When Hotz arrived that night in Leesburg, the entire community turned out to cajole Hotz with a home-cooked chicken dinner. It worked, and he stayed.

Hotz realized that his practice would fail if he set up his practice using the model of the three doctors who failed. So he brought in eight other doctors and set up a revolutionary system for providing low-cost (sometimes free) health care for indigent patients: Doctors who joined his network agreed to keep their fees about 25 percent lower than normal, and the centrally located Phoebe-Putney Memorial Hospital in nearby Albany became part of the network when it agreed to treat patients whether they can pay or not. The founder of Coca-Cola, who owns a nearby plantation, built a medical clinic for Hotz in Leesburg, and most specialists have agreed to perform for free such costly procedures as bypass surgery or cancer therapy for patients who cannot afford them.

To help defray the cost of free and lower-fee services, Hotz applies for federal grant moneys. He also gets \$500,000 worth of free drugs each year through special programs set up by drug companies. Most important to area residents, however is the fact that doctors are actually available—for everyone, the rich, the poor, and the uninsured.

You met Dr. Hotz recently while visiting relatives in the area. He's a genius at marshaling support for his style of people-friendly medicine, and when he heard you were a business student, he put you right to work. It seems a new orthopedic surgeon has moved into the Albany area and is charging fees better suited to big-city practices. The newcomer, Dr. Albert Reed, hasn't yet discovered that doctors in Hotz's loose network won't be referring patients to him, or that the only hospital in the area (Phoebe-Putney) won't let him work there unless he adopts the team spirit that has made health care in southern Georgia affordable for one and all.

Your task: Ghostwrite for Dr. Hotz (you write it, but it will go out under Hotz's signature) a letter to Dr. Reed in which you develop a strategy to persuade him to lower his fees. His address is 25 Franklin Rd., Albany, GA 31770. You need a doctor with his skills. There were no orthopedic surgeons in the area (or in the network) until he arrived about two weeks ago.