



# OPINION

## Anvils hurt, so take good care of yourself

An anvil dropped on my head. Several times.

That's how it felt when a massive headache ripped into me as I was putting in a few night hours at the Teton Valley News recently.

Aspirin usually does the trick when headaches strike, but there was no cure for this one. The tears were rolling down my cheeks and the throbbing wouldn't quit.

I don't get sick very often, but when I do, I get it bad, and then I become a crybaby. I have to be dragged kicking and screaming to go see a doctor, and I've only been to an emergency room once before. That was in the mid-1980s, when a guy helping me carry a 4x8-foot sheet of 3/4-inch particleboard decided to let go of his end. Those suckers are heavy. It landed edgewise across my left foot, blackening the toes from tip to arch. As Bill Cosby once said, "The pain was tremendous."

But that's another story.

This one started when I recently had a bout with what the folks at the clinic referred to as a "cold." It seemed like so much more, since my chest felt like I'd chain-smoked a carton of Camels while breathing in razor blades, I couldn't catch my breath and the cough was relentless.

Stubborn me, I waited too long before going in for relief, and ended up with bronchitis.

I was only three days past finishing a Z-Pak, that five-day prescription dose of azithromycin practically guaranteed to destroy every nasty germ in your body from your head down to your knees.

The headaches that came with my cold were controllable, until the other night, when the anvil dropped.

I took myself to the emergency room for some relief and kind treatment — both of which I got in spades — and promptly got an education on how difficult it can be to diagnose what headaches can portend.



*Reporter's*

NOTEBOOK

BY KEN LEVY

Mercifully, they dimmed the lights and provided a soft pillow to lie on while I waited for the parade of inquisitors to run their course.

"On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the worst pain you've ever experienced, how do you feel now?"

Not meaning to sound like a wimp, I blurted out "six!" even though I was pushing a 19.

The questions were as relentless as the pain, although I knew they were necessary. They were repeated, in variations and different orders, by four different people, including the advanced EMT who first interviewed me, a nurse, a physician's assistant and finally the head nurse practitioner.

The PA, who is essentially a trainee, explained that multiple questioning allows health care providers to compare notes on what I told them. I also think they were looking for consistency in my answers. Good luck with that. I'm not all that consistent even when I'm not sick.

They tested my cranial nerve functions, touching my cheeks, having me follow their fingers with my eyes only, in an H pattern, until it hurt to strain my eyes that far. I had to shrug my shoulders one at a time, turn my head from side to side and submit to a gag response test which — you guessed it — always makes me gag.

They checked every orifice in my head, and I was a bit self-conscious, having forgotten my Tic-Tacs.

I had to stare off into the distance, which is something I do pretty easily, while light was shined in my eyes. Who ever knew a tiny spot of light could hurt like needles?

I think they checked me for stroke, since they asked me to smile an awful lot. Anyone who knows me knows that's a real chore. I had to raise my arms above my head. No problems with anything. Except the anvils kept coming.

The nurse practitioner, the last of those to poke, prod, question, measure and otherwise examine, finally left, to confer with her comrades in medicine. I laid back on the gurney, hands over eyes, and wondered what the verdict would be. And what relief would eventually come.

She returned with a slight frown and solemn eyes, and I felt like a condemned man.

The diagnosis: migraine headaches exacerbated by sinusitis.

So THAT'S what that shiny sparkly aura is around my eyes every once in awhile. It gets pretty miserable, but I didn't bother to investigate what it meant.

I had a choice between taking my medication intravenously and a shot. I took the shot. Right into the muscle.

"You're going to feel a little pressure from this," I was warned.

Pressure, heck. It got all sore and achy on me. The headache soon abated somewhat, but now my arm hurt.

Other meds were prescribed and I was told, despite my vast intake of water every day, to make it much vaster amounts.

The one thing I learned from this experience is to treat my body like I treat my vehicle: plenty of preventive maintenance and regular tune-ups. And to pay more attention to things like not sleeping well, wearing out too soon and the rest of my crybaby aches and pains. Old age is definitely setting in.