

What's a Dentist to Do? The Emperor Has No Clothes

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Once upon a time ...

there lived an emperor who loved clothes. His tailors were constantly at work making him new garments of wool, linen, taffeta, and lace. He was forever strutting through the palace showing off his latest outfit.

It so happened that important foreign diplomats were to visit soon, and a parade was planned to welcome them. The emperor needed something splendid, something extraordinary to wear. To the chief minister he called, "Find me the very best tailor in the kingdom to make me something special for the parade."

So a decree was drawn up and announced throughout the kingdom seeking the most skilled of tailors. Tailors with their finest cloth lined up to gain the position. Two of them, however, held nothing at all. These two rascals, named Guido and Luigi Farabutto, approached the emperor,

arms extended, exclaiming, "This is the most amazing cloth there is, so fine and delicate that it is invisible, but invisible only to fools and simpletons. Anyone who is wise and able can clearly see it."

Of course, the emperor could not see it because there was nothing there, nor could the chief minister or anyone else for that matter. However, the emperor said, "Yes, this cloth is beautiful." He did not want to look like a fool.

The emperor hired Guido and Luigi. They immediately began weaving in return for a large purse of coins.

The next day, upon measuring the emperor for his new outfit, they indicated they needed more gold thread than they had figured and

therefore needed more money.

"You will look very handsome," Luigi told the emperor. "Your visitors will be impressed - unless, of course, they are fools!"

The day of the parade approached.

The emperor
needed
something
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to wear.

Please e-mail us at jackchurchill@msn.com or fax us at (612) 339-3618. We look forward to hearing from you not only regarding this article, but also if you have any ethical dilemmas you would like to present to the membership. Perhaps we can help you decide what to do.

"Your new suit is ready," the tailors told the emperor. The emperor undressed. The tailors pretended to hand him his new clothes. The emperor pretended to put them on. As he strode through the palace, servants bowed and murmured praise. His foreign visitors were shocked, of course, to see the emperor completely naked, but said nothing at all. No

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one wanted to admit to not seeing a magnificent new suit of clothes for fear of being thought a fool.

A large crowd gathered at the parade grounds. They wanted to see who the fools were who couldn't see the emperor's new clothes.

The royal procession began. First, the foreign visitors, next, the important ministers, and finally the emperor appeared. A gasp ... then cheers.

"Look at the emperor's new clothes!" the people roared.

A small boy, however, seeing the naked emperor, exclaimed, "The emperor has no clothes!"

The crowd fell silent. Then someone called out, "It is true – the emperor has no clothes on!"

The emperor, blushing and embarrassed, thought to himself, "I didn't want to be thought of as a fool, but now I am the biggest fool of all." The emperor walked away, leaving Guido and Luigi laughing and clutching their bags of gold.

This tale tells of a collective ignorance of an obvious fact despite individual recognition of its absurdity. With the upcoming "Top Dentists" features in July of 2007, the MDA wants to bring to view the absurdity of these lists.

The tailors here are *Mpls/St. Paul* and *Minnesota Monthly* magazines. They are dressing us up in our finest "Top Dentist" cloaks and in so doing stuffing their purses full of coins.

Worse yet, to advertise the fact we are on these lists thereby inferring superiority over our colleagues only adds to our wardrobe and fills their purses further.

Each of us must look at him- or herself in the mirror. Don't try to fool yourself or others. There are no new clothes. In the Hans Christian Andersen Danish fairy tale, the emperor was exposed. We must expose the pretension of these "Top Dentists" lists. Let's be the little boy in the crowd and blow the whistle on them. In so doing, our profession will not be foolish, but wise beyond measure. Just remember...the emperor has no clothes. ■