

AXFORD, ALFRED  
1853-February 20. 1921

Alfred Axford died suddenly under the care of a chiropractor. As Health Officer of Platte county, it becomes my unpleasant duty, by order of the State Board of Health, to refuse a burial permit, as a chiropractor has neither the legal or moral right to sign a death certificate, giving the cause of death. With the sanction of the State Board of Health, Coroner Pepper ordered an investigation which fell to me as County Physician to conduct. Dr. P.R. Holtz was called in to assist.

The autopsy revealed the fact the man died of uremia, due to an obstruction of the bladder, and accompanying complications. Any intelligent surgeon could have relieved this condition in a few minutes, and if done in time, could have prolonged his life, and restored him to a condition of comfort and activity.

If ignorant and irregular practitioners of medicine and the general public could view such autopsies, and see the disastrous results of ignorance and quackery in our midst, I'm sure it would bring about great changes. The ignorant practitioner with a conscience would get busy and learn something or quit his profession, and the public would cease to tolerate incompetence, or permit the greedy quack to ply his trade in human misery.

To find out the true cause of the death is of no help to the man that is gone, and precious little consolation to the family and friends who are left. If such an investigation as this has no more far reaching result than the mere satisfaction of the letter of the law, it has accomplished little. What it should do is wake you up to the fact that a correct diagnosis is absolutely essential for intelligent treatment. If unchallenging this would have been one more death certificate sign "heart trouble" when the heart was perfectly normal.

This report to the public has been written without fear or favor, or without personal feeling against any individual. It is the value which I put on human life that forces me to protest under circumstances such as these of the past week.

Fred W. Phifer  
Health Officer and County Physician of Platte County, Wyo.