

---

---

# Only the Bad and the Ugly. No Good

In spite of our differing opinions, we promised to respect each other and work together to achieve our goals and do our jobs (and we have the same expectation from our elected officials).



**HAMID  
TAVAKOLI**

---

AT WORK, I am responsible for all emergency and inpatient psychiatric consultations.

I have a large team of residents, interns and medical students. Every day I continue to be impressed by how hard they work and amazingly bright they are.

We start each day with a huddle, then we “divide and conquer” (we divide our case-loads and attempt to defeat our patients’ agony and pain the best we can).

I repeatedly tutor them that the most important lesson is to remain optimistic and energized in order to defeat the greatest enemy not just in modern medicine, but our society at large: Cynicism.

The psychiatry service is a busy one; however, we periodically have days when we can actually sit down for a longer session to review recent

journals, publications and research in the field. We have at times ventured into topics to include what has been on everyone’s mind and all over the media: the upcoming elections.

One day last week we were discussing this topic, as delicately as we could. During the conversation, I had to step out of my office after a former resident had knocked on my door. She had a quick question regarding a complicated outpatient case we both had seen recently.

I left my mobile phone in my office where my team of eight was continuing their political discussion. When I walked back in, I found them silently staring at my ringing phone.

I picked it up. It was our homeowner association manager. (Don’t worry. I always pay my dues. The call was for

an unrelated matter). I apologized to the team. They still looked a bit nonplussed. A student then asked the question that was on their minds: “What was that ringtone?”

Laughter ensued. The ringtone was from the movie “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly.” It’s a classic, a 1966 Italian epic Spaghetti Western, arguably the best ever made in that genre, and definitely one of the greatest films of all time.

I asked if they had seen it. Crickets. (I realized later that one of my older residents had seen the movie, but he was off duty that day.)

They were curious and amused by what seemed to them my continuous idiosyncratic taste in most things. Since it was a relatively slow day, I went ahead and explained the premise of the movie, focusing on the three main characters:

The Good is played by Clint Eastwood, referred to as “Blondie.” He is subdued and confident.

The Good is forced to work with the Ugly to find hidden treasure.

In spite of his quest for



**In the 1966 film “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly,” Clint Eastwood plays Blondie, the “good” character. The movie is widely viewed as one of the best films of all time.**

gold, at his core, Blondie has a compassionate heart. This becomes evident as he travels through a country that is filled with blood and death.

The movie is set during the Civil War. In one scene, he comments: “I’ve never seen so many men wasted so badly.”

The Bad is played by Lee Van Cleef. He is a ruthless, sociopathic mercenary who kills anyone, even women and children, for money, if they come his way.

The Ugly is played by Eli Wallach. He is a comical and

crude guy. He is not evil or “bad,” just really rough and unpolished.

I don’t want to give away the ending, but he and Blondie end up working together, albeit reluctantly.

I then explained to my team that, in this year’s election, we don’t have Clint Eastwood’s character.

We have no Good. All we have is Bad and Ugly, and we disagreed about which candidate was which.

In spite of our differing opinions, we promised to respect each other and work together to achieve our goals and do our jobs (and we have the same expectation from our elected officials).

Our jobs came on fast and furious shortly after: We got paged to four new cases in the ER.

It could have been a comfortable Tuesday, but that was just wishful thinking. As we parted ways to conquer, we all hoped for the Good to at least make an appearance in the last days of the 2016 presidential election.

**Hamid Tavakoli** is a psychiatrist and lives in Norfolk.

---

---