

I had a patient come to see me the other day and feel compelled to share his story. I will leave out names and locations to protect the identity of those involved. In this article I will call the patient Mr. Smith. I have a number of concerns with the events that Mr. Smith experienced. Perhaps if the doctors involved read this article, they may take a different action in the future.

Mr. Smith came to me suffering from lower back pain that he developed while driving during a visit with his son in a nearby state. He had never had this type of pain before. When he returned from his trip, his back was feeling some better, but he decided to visit with his medical doctor just to be sure. After a brief examination, his doctor wrote out a referral to a local hospital to have some x-rays taken. Mr. Smith has no insurance and since he was feeling better he decided not to go to the hospital. Up to now, I agree with the decisions of his doctor.

A few days later he felt the pain again and decided to go ahead and have the x-rays taken. The doctor at the hospital who read the x-rays told Mr. Smith that he had a broken tail bone and would need to consult with an orthopedic specialist in Chattanooga. Generally speaking, bones don't break just riding in a vehicle. In addition, the pain was not in the region of the tail bone.

The doctor in Chattanooga ordered a CAT scan. The results of the CAT scan confirmed that there was not broken tailbone.