I think the counseling of patients regarding prenatal diagnosis (with termination) requires that we direct patients to explore their values about disability and human life. This task is daunting (particularly in a 15-minute visit!). I believe my patients need help at such times to work through their feelings about this very painful prospect and discover their heart’s choice. In this counseling I hope to be nonjudgmental and listen well. I also want to challenge assumptions and help them look deeply.

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The above letter was referred to the authors of the article in question, who offer the following reply.

To the Editor: We appreciate Dr. Nicklin’s personal reflections. We hope our article continues to stimulate discussion about the appropriate application of such screening tests as the multiple marker screening test. In this article we hoped to convey to the busy physician what we believed were the minimum requirements for adequate pretest counseling. It is clear that nondirective counseling is fundamental if a patient is to reach a decision regarding screening that is most consistent with her values and desires. It is also clear from reading the literature that physicians do not do a very good job of this type of counseling. Our guideline for pretest counseling is intentionally simplified in an effort to assist physicians in trying to fit this discussion into a 15-minute visit. We agree it is difficult.

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References

Family Physicians and Firearm Safety Counseling
To the Editor: Shaunessy and colleagues,1 in their article on family physicians and firearm safety counseling, have clarified a long-neglected question: how do patients view physicians’ counseling on firearms?

Patients have good reasons to view such counseling with skepticism. The American Medical Association (AMA),2 the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP),3 and the American College of Physicians (ACP)4 have all adopted and publicized policies urging more gun control. These policies range from even higher tax burdens on gun owners to support for handgun bans. All these organizations advocate legislation hostile to gun owners.

None of these organizations or physicians firearm experts attempt to reconcile or even acknowledge the existing body of criminology research on firearms. Most