ABRAHAM LINCOLN’S SUIT AGAINST A MEDICAL IMPOSTER WHO ASSAULTED HIS CLIENT

Allen D. Spiegel, PhD, MPH; Florence Kavaler, MD, MPH

ABSTRACT: In 1851, A. Lincoln, Esquire represented Edward Jones who charged in a law suit that his attending physician had assaulted him. Jones, also a lawyer, had sharply questioned Dr. Joseph S. Maus about his claims of attendance and graduation from Philadelphia’s Jefferson Medical College, an allopathic medical school. Jones claimed that Maus became enraged at his persistent questioning and attacked him. In turn, Maus denied the allegation. He said that he was merely defending himself from Jones’ blows with a large cane. Lincoln’s legal approach was to argue about the state of medical education and whether Maus had really graduated from Jefferson Medical College. Acting as a peacemaker, he finally arranged to settle the dispute between Jones and Maus out of court.

KEY WORDS: Abraham Lincoln; lawyer; law suit; medical education; Jefferson Medical College.

ASSAULT AND BATTERY?

In 1851, Abraham Lincoln (Figure 1) represented Edward Jones in his *Trespass Vi Et Armis* suit against Dr. Joseph S. Maus for $5,000.00 in damages. Essentially, Jones alleged that Maus assaulted him with force of arms. There was a heated imbroglio between the two over Maus’ claim that he had graduated from the Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia. When Jones persisted in questioning whether Maus had really graduated

Allen D. Spiegel, PhD, MPH, and Florence Kavaler, MD, MPH, are both Professors, Department of Preventive Medicine and Community Health, State University of New York, Downstate Medical Center, College of Medicine, 450 Clarkson Avenue, Box 43, Brooklyn, NY 11203.
Requests for reprints should be addressed to Dr. Allen D. Spiegel, SUNY, Downstate Medical Center, 450 Clarkson Avenue Box 43, Brooklyn, NY 11203.

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FIGURE 1
Abraham Lincoln as he appeared when he practiced law in Illinois (National Archives, Library of Congress).