

Sir,

In his William Pickles Lecture Dr Norell informs us that by 'doctor' he is naturally referring to proper doctors; that is to say, general practitioners. I was puzzled.

Is he implying that general practitioners have a monopoly on propriety? I was not aware that our hospital colleagues were more indecent or venal than us — on the contrary it seems that impropriety is spread throughout the breadth of the profession. Surely general practitioners are not more strict or appropriate, thorough or befitting than other doctors.

For years general practitioners have had to suffer the real or imagined disdain of some ill-informed hospital consultants. The Royal College has done much to reveal the futility of these attitudes. Surely Dr Norell is not taking a sideways swipe at his colleagues?

No; it must be the word 'doctor' that I am misinterpreting. The dictionary provided the answer as 'a ship's cook'. Being ignorant of culinary matters and with memories of cross-Channel trips causing increasing nausea I decided I could miss out on the William Pickles Lecture of this year.

RUPERT GUDE

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Sir,

I did enjoy the William Pickles Lecture. Dr Norell has expressed his thoughts on education for general practice with considerable elegance and wit, and I am in agreement with him on many points. How much nicer would the field of general practice look without some of its worn out sacred cows. I cannot help regretting that a government Statute ensures that the present Vocational Training cow has to be kept indefinitely, but hopefully some of the others, the exam cow, the associateship cow perhaps, could be taken to the knackers yard, leaving room in the field which could be used more effectively.

I was at first rather taken aback when the worth of the sacred cow Caritas was called into question, but on further thought I realized what every doctor knows, that patients come to us for advice because we know more about the human mind and body than they do. Kindness they can be given by their auntie, the milkman, or even by an ignorant charlatan, and kindness can sometimes encourage self pity and reinforce harmful attitudes. Thoughtfulness sounds a more promising beast.

As well as being stimulated to think I was also very cheered to find that there is a doctor in the upper reaches of the College who thinks as he does, and who wants

others to think for themselves and not just to follow the latest fashionable trends.

Thank you Dr Norell for telling us what every doctor knows.

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Associate

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Sir,

I have a bone to pick with the College.

Jack Norell rightly stated in the 1984 William Pickles Lecture many of its Fellows had not taken the membership examination. Indeed the *History of the RCGP* states the hospitality of some of the original founding fathers was such that they could hardly be refused. No doubt those who were entertained at the Rockerfeller villa in Italy were all suitably entertained.

In answer to the question 'What can you give?' posed on page 34 of the *History*, I would say simply this:

To my patients; nine years of devoted service while myself suffering from what I am told is an incurable genetic disease. I won the admiration and respect of the whole community despite my handicap.

To my partner; a year of service working for him while he was himself ill and giving him half my earnings so that he could support his wife and family.

To my education; a year in the UK to prepare for the examination of the College as a trainee, having been nine years in practice.

To the College; three sets of fees for the examination.

I do not mind failing because of lack of knowledge but I find it difficult to accept that my attitude is not up to the required standard when I have stood in for my partner night after night, and never missed a call for a whole year, unable to afford a locum.

There was something rotten in the House of Denmark. Is all well in the Royal College?

P. M. QUINN

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PS. Publish, if you dare.

## Membership

Sir,

The Royal Commission on Medical Education is absolutely right to consider the ongoing education of the established general practitioner: the Scottish Council planned experiment is well worth watching, but is only likely to help the keen general practitioners.