

Diary

national primary care conference be taken forward, but that in order that partnership options be explored in more detail, the new meeting format would be deferred until 2007. Arrangements for the Spring Meeting in 2006 will be brought back to Council during 2005.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like any further information on the matters discussed above or any other issues we covered at Council then please do not hesitate to contact me by email via honsec@rcgp.org.uk.

The Council will next meet on Saturday 12 February 2005 at 9am at Princes Gate.

MAUREEN BAKER**12 January**

Child Health Surveillance Course
The Woodlands Conference Centre,
Chorley

Contact: Debbie Leyland
E-mail: dleyland@rcgp.org.uk
Tel: 01925 662351

14 January

MRCGP Exam Course (residential)
The Newton Hotel and Highland
Conference Centre, Nairn

Contact: Alison Swanson
E-mail: nscotland@rcgp.org.uk
Tel: 01463 705539

18 January

Cannabis and the Primary Care
Practitioner
RCGP, Princes Gate, London

Contact: Nikki Whitelock
E-mail: nwhitelock@rcgp.org.uk
Tel: 020 7344 3124

26 January

Mental Health in Clinical Practice
Course — Module 2
The Woodlands Conference Centre,
Chorley

Contact: Jackie Dartnell
E-mail: jdartnell@rcgp.org.uk
Tel: 01925 662351

29 January

Annual Fellows Meeting
Arundel House Hotel, Cambridge

Contact: Annemarie McCarty
E-mail: jc03@dial.pipex.com
Tel: 01223 884324

31 January

MRCGP Examination Preparation
Course
Langstone Campus, University of
Portsmouth

Contact: Carol White
E-mail: cwhite@rcgp.org.uk
Tel: 01264 355005

*Neville Goodman***LITTLE VICTORIES AND A LARGE LOSS**

The creationists in the US are changing tack. They posit a new theory called 'intelligent design', which they are pushing for inclusion in school biology curricula. They maintain their cry that evolution is no more than a theory, but this is just playing with words. Evolution is a theory in the sense that we can't run an experiment to see if human beings develop from an ancestor that resembles an ape, but there is enough circumstantial evidence for evolution being the only sensible way of describing how the world that we know came about. We can watch what happens to white moths in sooty landscapes, and bacteria exposed to antibiotics, and we know about the genetic code. Evolution looks like a good explanation to me. There is no evidence for intelligent design or its intelligent designer, other than a failure of imagination — and there is no way of testing it at all.

So, no victory for anyone there, but I claim one on another ground. I've been holding my breath, but the *Observer* does seem to have demoted the Barefoot Doctor. He's still there, but with only a half-page of touchy-feely stuff; he no longer gives quasi-medical advice on readers' problems. Other than the occasional supportive e-mail, there is little enough visible result from what I write, which I see as incontrovertibly logical and unimpeachable attacks on unsustainable premises, so I shall claim Barefoot's demotion as a victory, albeit a little one.

Now to something that I simply cannot let pass without comment. It's no longer topical, and it's not medical, except in the sense that a heart attack was its cause. John Peel died in October. I used to listen to him every night. Don't tell the BBC but I have cassette tapes full of stuff that he played. Failure to acknowledge a death is common when someone close dies, but there are different ways of being close and I find it difficult to accept that Peelle is dead. And I was amazed at the reaction in the country to the death of a mere DJ: not just obituaries — even a *Weather Girl (It's raining men)* got one of those — but full pages and double-page spreads, and stories that went on for days. To all those who, like me on hearing the news, went straight over to the hi-fi and played the Undertones' *Teenage Kicks* and cried: I know how you feel.