

Diary

10 February

Fellows Dinner
Crabwall Manor, Mollington, Chester
Contact: Anna Reid
E-mail: mersey@rcgp.org.uk
Tel: 0151 708 0865

15 February

Careers Evening for Clinical Students
Unsure of Chosen Career Path
Clinical School, Addenbrooke's Hospital,
Cambridge
Contact: Annemarie McCarty
E-mail: eanglia@rcgp.org.uk
Tel: 01223 884324

15 February

Clinical Update and Advances for General
Practitioners
Oriel House Hotel, St Asaph
Contact: Sali Davis
E-mail: sdavis@rcgp.org.uk
Tel: 029 20504604

21 February

Epilepsy
University Club, University of Nottingham
Campus
Contact: Janet Baily
E-mail: janet.baily@nottingham.ac.uk
Tel: 0115 8466 902

21 February

3 day MRCGP Examination
preparation course
Brookfield Hotel, Emsworth
Contact: Mrs Carol White
E-mail: cwhite@rcgp.org.uk
Tel: 01264 355013

22 February

Clinical Update: Men's Health
RCGP Princes Gate, London
Contact: Events Department
E-mail: events@rcgp.org.uk
Tel: 020 7344 3124

23 February

Minor Surgery Course
Luton Rugby Club, Newlands Road, Luton
Contact: Hilary Sellers
E-mail: bedsandherts@rcgp.org.uk
Tel: 01582 404088

23 February

MRCGP Preparation Course
Pilgrim Hospital, Boston, Lincolnshire
Contact: Janet Baily
E-mail: janet.baily@nottingham.ac.uk
Tel: 0115 8466 902

25 February

MRCGP Preparation Course Spring 2006
RCGP, Princes Gate, London
Contact: Cathy Salmon
E-mail: csalmon@rcgp.org.uk
Tel: 0207 173 6073

28 February

Increase your effectiveness (and reduce
your risk) skills workshop
The Red Rose Hub, Nr Preston,
Lancashire
Contact: Liz Brown
E-mail: lbrown@rcgp.org.uk
Tel: 01925 662351

Neville Goodman

IDEAL STANDARD

I've always thought that surgical elbow taps make sense. Why don't they have them in public places? 'Please wash your hands', indeed; but what's the first thing you touch with your faeces-ridden hands? And what's the last thing you touch before turning to the dryer? If we had to use our elbows to turn the taps, as we do in operating theatres, there would be no need to risk contaminated taps. I can't think of any disadvantages.

There are automatic taps. They are hygienic, certainly, but a triumph of technology over necessity. And it's so embarrassing trying to turn on the tap when you don't realise how it works. A friend once spent 5 minutes searching desperately for the flush in a hi-tech loo. Having given up, and having to accept that he had not got rid of the evidence, he opened the cubicle door — which was, of course, the trigger to flush.

In our hospital, elbow taps turn on towards you, and off away from you. It's the logical sequence because it's then difficult to turn the tap on but easy to bang it off. Except in one changing room (although I can't speak for the female changing rooms), which ensures a soaking because smartly pushing the tap for off puts it full on. There's another thing about theatre changing rooms. They all have toilets in. One of the reasons that I'm an anaesthetist and not a surgeon is that I couldn't last through a long case without nipping out to the loo. But while there are notices everywhere telling us not to go outside the theatre suite in theatre blues, there are no notices asking us to change our blues after going to the toilet. There's a research project for someone there.

Alongside the soap dispensers we now have handcream dispensers. Repeated washing in strong soap does dry the skin, and the recently introduced alcohol dispensers are even worse, so they are welcome, but I do wish someone would learn a lesson from the motor industry. All vehicles, right-hand or left-hand drive, of whatever origin, have the accelerator on the right and the brake on the left. Unlike video, hard drive, and DVD formats, there is no fighting between manufacturers or countries for their own pattern to be followed. The reason is obvious. So why is the soap sometimes on the left and sometimes on the right? Hand cream lathers poorly, and soap doesn't rub in. Either delays my return to the operating theatre. Standardisation of alcohol gel or alcohol solution would be nice, too. Expect gel and get solution and it'll be all down your trouser leg.