

Editorial

By the time you are reading this, Christmas will be but a fleeting memory – the fourth January in a row that I will have reminded you of that fact. All those relatives that we so look forward to seeing will have assumed, as the saying goes, the smell of rotten fish unless they have departed within 3 days. Sadly, my two eldest, who it must be said came back from university already exuding a heady mix of ketones and rotten fish, and who now reside in Bristol with that most famous of all obstetricians, Professor Eric Thomas, will be staying at home for another 2 weeks before resuming their £3000-per-annum-for-6-contact-hours-per-week experience of an undergraduate education in the arts. Not that I'm bitter about personally bankrolling Bristol University's multimillion pound redevelopment programme but it does raise a very interesting question about value for money. Could an arts degree actually be taken in 18 months? Imagine if undergraduate medicine were 6 contact hours per week!

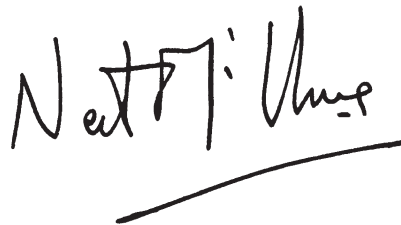
In the College, on another committee and under the ever-able Mary Ann Lumsden's chairmanship, we are endeavouring to define a national undergraduate curriculum for obstetrics and gynaecology. This is an almost impossible task because of the disparity in undergraduate obstetrics and gynaecology training offered across the UK. I, personally, am tired of hearing from those who need ever more time to teach medical students to remove all traces of surnames from any contact with their 'clients': 'Hello, Rosemary, I'm Betty. [Fascinating for all involved and terrific in a beauty parlour, no doubt.] Would it be all right if I took a history?'. (On the Celtic fringe, a 'wee history'.) These protagonists of communication believe that obstetrics and gynaecology is really a postgraduate subject and that students don't actually need exposure to it as undergraduates. So, why study medicine, paediatrics, surgery or psychiatry at undergraduate level? Is it not time for us to fight back and remind those who design undergraduate curricula up and down the nation that women's health impinges on every branch of medicine (*vide infra*)?

In this edition of TOG, we ably demonstrate just this point. Lisa Devlin and Patrick Morrison take us into the world of genetics and inherited gynaecological syndromes. Philip Savage reviews molar pregnancy – more chromosomal abnormalities and some fascinating international epidemiology. Gillian Vanhegan looks at contraception in the

under-16s – anatomy, physiology, morality, sociology and endocrinology, all in one article. Pamela Loughna reviews failure to detect and treat congenital abnormalities: anatomy, physics, diagnostics, ethics and medicolegal issues. On the same line, Tarek El-Toukhy *et al.* review the ethics of preimplantation diagnosis: lots of ethics, embryology and biochemistry there. Brenda Kelly *et al.* look at the recent developments in HIV medicine and the impact on women's health – virology, pharmacology, epidemiology and sociology. The urologists, as usual, don't want to be left out and this time look at recurrent urinary tract infection in gynaecological practice: bacteriology, imaging, endocrinology and pharmacology. Then Su-Yen Khong, Ian Currie and Simon Eccles look at both NHS Connecting for Health and the National Programme for Information Technology: economics, management, data sharing and the information highway. Should we be more proactive in participating as a profession? Of course, the answer is yes. There is also a new device, reported on by Mandeep Singh and Rajiv Varma, for elevating the deeply engaged head at caesarean section – mechanics, obstetrics and research and development. All in all, in this bumper edition for the New Year, a veritable undergraduate curriculum's worth of medical education, a demonstration of how relevant obstetrics and gynaecology is to medical education and, in itself, a superb postgraduate read.

Finally, 'And finally...' sees James in superb form on the role of the editor-in-chief, author and reviewer; publication of research and the skills involved therein are covered too. James, many of you will not know, does a fantastic impersonation of Sir John Betjeman – most recently in Belfast, for the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, on my suggestion (potential authors watch out: you just never know where writing an article for TOG can lead).

Have a fantastic 2008. I should warn you, I'm afraid, that I've just been reappointed as Editor-in-Chief for a second 3-year term. My apologies in advance.



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Neil McClure



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