

Reply

After 'I'm glad I'm not young anymore' was published,¹ I was delighted to receive some kind correspondence. The most touching of all came from a senior professor who is both a prolific author and a frequenter of many an airport lounge. He told me that when his wife read it, she wept because it had touched on something deep. An email from a writer who is a specialist's wife said:

I read your essay on the merits of old age with great interest and enjoyment too. You love to see the underpinning of your profession and are ruthlessly honest in appraising what others might find too scary.

I risked offending some academics as I know the species and have been a clinical associate professor. I even published an article about the lamentable lack of support academics received from the University of Queensland.² In past articles I have revealed the doctor–doctor relationship,³ the need for balance in life as well as the need for a more holistic approach to medicine⁴ with a total of five in *Outside the Square* series in the *Internal Medicine Journal*.

À propos Dr O'Rourke's letter, I regret that I have ruined a Christmas Present for a man pining for the halcyon days of a William Osler and Christmas Past. For his emotive account of teaching may I recommend some remedial reading of my other articles in *Outside the Square*? I have taught for 30 years and can still boast a few close professional relationships. I even sleep with a doctor. I am currently writing a paper with a colleague and former student who practises in Western Queensland. As for patients, I see sarcoidosis patients from far and wide. As for personalities like Osler, I think the most memorable doctors I have known have either been curmudgeons like Derek Meyers and Austin Doyle or been exuberant bow-tied characters like D. Geraint-James and a few of Nature's gentlemen, space does not allow me to list, not to mention some brilliant students who are now professors. We need curmudgeons as well as the feisty and flamboyant in medicine, as this variety of styles adds up our own recipe of what it is to be a doctor. Their example resonates throughout our unconscious world like the ghosts of the Dreamtime.

As for our young cardiologist, Dr Bridgman, academia is a state of mind, not a chair, and scepticism in prescribing habits, a healthy thing. I could write a book on the number of patients with costochondritis who have had a 'cath' for central chest pain without prior palpation of the chest. As for 'keeping up', in January, I submitted five papers for publication including one in French and have several more in preparation. As for drugs, I have fearlessly criticized our often incestuous relationship with pharmaceutical companies that drives prescribing as much as science.⁵ As for beta-blockers, I am no Luddite. Humbug, I say.

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