

EDITORIAL

The British Medical Journal (BMJ) of 6th April this year was published at a good time for this journal, and helped to dispel a lingering doubt of the editorial board. The Editor's Choice introduced two personal views, one about the frustrations of trying to create a regional brain injury rehabilitation unit, and the other a personal account of a brain stem stroke. The BMJ defended the publication of personal views as an important source of learning and said "that we must learn from wherever we can".

As it happens, the clinical focus in this issue started out as a broad feature on neurology but changed gradually and unexpectedly into something about acquired brain injury. There are two articles giving personal accounts of the effects of serious injury and they are powerful, direct descriptions of what it means to endure such trauma and what life is like afterwards. The messages are clear: you need money to get the best aftercare in serious head injury and one must always be optimistic. Bad things happen, shuffle life's deck of cards

and then become history. The trick is to keep aiming for improvement, to believe in recovery.

One editorial dilemma about personal views is that they can expose too much about the author(s). They can be exhausting and painful to write and may uncover feelings or memories that are unwelcome. Authors need courage. Yet it seems that the readers are sure to benefit because the observations and testimony of respected colleagues are truly educational despite the lack of 'science'. Is it right to believe that the greater good is served by delving publicly into private matters? The BMJ helped us to say yes . . . probably. See what you think. There is plenty of 'science' elsewhere in this issue, which contains a wide range of topics and authors. It is pleasing to see so many GPs getting into print and it is timely to remind GP registrars that they are eligible for the Lancaster and Westmorland Medical Journal prize.

MIKE FLANAGAN

Editor

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