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Musical encore

John Carne, retired general practitioner

Chickenpox (or varicella) affected my life in quite a few ways as a general practitioner (GP). I have already told a tragic story of chickenpox encephalitis in a previous edition of this journal.⁽¹⁾ This is perhaps a rather happier episode.

It was my privilege to be GP to the Director of Music at Lancaster University and his family. He it was who arranged the series of concerts held there. After the concert, he always invited the soloists back to his home for dinner. On the occasion when Julian Bream, the guitarist, was to give a solo performance at the University concert hall, the music director's wife phoned me in the morning. She told me she thought the two children had chickenpox and asked what she should do re Julian Bream. I said I would come and confirm the diagnosis. She didn't think that would be necessary, but I went nevertheless and confirmed her diagnosis.

'We have Julian Bream coming to dinner here tonight,' she said. 'What should I tell him?' she asked, with some obvious anxiety. I tried to ease her worries by telling her that most of us get it in childhood and probably this renowned concert performer had already had it and so would not get it a second time. However, I suggested that it was her duty to let him know the situation in case he had not had the ailment. 'And anyway,' I said, 'you know my wife well enough

to contact her and ask if it would be alright to have the meal in our house.'

It took her until 5.00pm that day to get in touch with this famous man. No, he had never had chickenpox, and being on a concert tour he was not willing to be exposed to the risk of getting it. No, he would not visit their home.

My wife was hastily contacted and agreed the dinner party should be held in our house. The Director's wife produced all the food and much of the table decorations and my wife some of the cutlery, crockery and table cloths.

The dinner party was a great success and so we were able to boast we had entertained Julian Bream, a friend of his and an accompanying composer; Stephen Dodgson (composer of a guitar concerto), to dinner in our home.

All this thanks to chickenpox!

REFERENCE

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