

### Healy-feely telly

Changes over 40 years in the content of Dutch non-fiction medical television programmes probably mirror the changing times. Expert speakers have had less time allotted to them, while lay people have had more and more say. The scientific origins of the story are now emphasised less, and patients and the public are given more airtime to express their tensions and feelings. 'The results suggest three periods of medical television: a scientific, a journalistic and a lay period.' (*Public Understanding of Science* 2008;17:461-472)

### The emotional bank account

Drawing on the term Covey used in *The seven habits of highly effective people*, CMF member Nick Wooding reflects on the 'emotional bank account'. Every time we do something good with people we relate to, we make a deposit into their 'trust account'. He writes: 'The appropriate diagnosis, the kind word, the effective treatment, the concern for the person and their family, are all ways of making deposits...Of course, it is also possible to make withdrawals', and illustrates these possibilities from his consultations. (*BJGP* 2009; February:141)

### Public 'favour religious values'

A recent BBC poll suggests that the majority of people in Britain want 'religion' and the values derived from it to play an important role in public life. ComRes questioned 1,045 people and 62% were in favour, while 63% agreed that laws should respect and be influenced by the UK's traditional religious values. Robert Pigott writes 'even at a time when baptisms, church weddings and attendance at Sunday services are declining, people are unwilling for secularism to displace religion altogether'. (BBC News 24 February 2009. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7906595.stm>)

### 'As an atheist, I truly believe Africa needs God'

A headline like that was bound to get this piece in *The Times* widely circulated over the New Year, and probably makes columnist Matthew Parris one of those 'unwilling for secularism to displace religion altogether'. To assess a charity project, he returned to the Malawi he'd known as a boy as Nyasaland, and gives a wonderful testimony to the quiet witness of indigenous Christians. The article is subtitled: 'Missionaries, not money, are the solution to Africa's biggest problem - the crushing passivity of the people's mindset'. (*The Times* 27 December 2008, [www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/matthew\\_parris/article5400568.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/matthew_parris/article5400568.ece))

### Ordination and donation

CMF is non-denominational but not just Anglican members will be encouraged by Church of England statistics in October 2008 showing an increase in the number of clergy being trained and ordained in 2007: 552 compared with 481 the year before. Weekly giving by parishioners increased by 6% between 2005 and 2006 to an average of £5.38, and Christmas and Easter attendances were up in 2007 compared to 2006 by 7% and 5% respectively. (Christian Research *Quadrant*, 2009; January:1)

### Trust me, I'm a doctor

They still do. For the 25<sup>th</sup> year running, doctors topped a poll in which the general public was asked which profession they trusted to tell the truth. 92% trusted doctors to tell the truth, with teachers next at 87%, then professors (79%), judges (78%), and clergy (74%). Journalists came last with just 19%. Commissioned by the Royal College of Physicians, Ipsos MORI interviewed 2,029 adults aged 16 in late 2008. (*BMJ Careers* 2009; 21 February:GP58)

### 'God healed him'

In the *BMJ's* 'Medical Classics' column, Professor Harold Ellis reviewed the 1951 publication of *The Apologie and Treatise of Ambroise Paré*, edited by Geoffrey Keynes. Describing Paré as 'my surgical hero', Ellis tells of 'perhaps the first controlled clinical trial' after which Paré never again used boiling oil on gunshot wounds, and concludes 'Paré was essentially a kind and humble man...he ends his description of the treatment of a bullet wound...with perhaps his most famous phrase: "I dressed the wound, and God healed him"'. (*BMJ* 2009;338:b203)

### A Coptic Orthodox priest

Eutyclus loves the stories in obituary columns, and was drawn to a photo of the late Nabil Fakry Salama who graduated in Egypt, and worked in O&G in Nigeria, Libya, Saudi Arabia and Gibraltar. In 1995 he was ordained a Coptic Orthodox priest and as Father Mikhail Ibrahim Salama ministered in Golders Green, daily giving communion to patients in hospital. In 2002 he set up the Coptic Medical Society. The photo shows him in full clerical attire, holding a baby whom perhaps he has just christened. (*BMJ* 2009;338:b359)

### Online networking and health

A poll at CMF's national students' conference showed that a majority spend significant periods each day on social networking sites like Facebook, but there are now warnings this may not be healthy. Dr Aric Sigman claims that the reduction in levels of face-to-face contact may harm health. 'Social networking sites should allow us to embellish our social lives, but what we find is very different. The tail is wagging the dog. These are not tools that enhance, they are tools that displace...There does seem to be a difference between "real presence" and the virtual variety.' (BBC News 19 February 2009. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7898510.stm>)

### Long hours and dementia risk

A Finnish-led study analysed 2, 214 middle aged British civil servants and found that those working more than 55 hours a week had poorer mental skills (problems with short term memory and word recall) than those doing standard hours. Those doing the most overtime recorded the lowest scores in tests of reasoning and vocabulary. The researchers wonder 'whether long working hours predict more serious conditions such as dementia'. (BBC News 25 February 2009. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/7909464.stm>)