

Vignettes

Following the 'retirement' of the Clinical Hints column in December 2018, Mark Knapp has taken up his pen to provide some short anecdotes and observations on the lighter side of dentistry.

The following is the first of Mark's contributions.

In life, professional indemnity insurance often fails to provide full cover. American author and wit, Mark Twain, instead proposed that 'humour is our best defense against the universe.' On consideration, the premiums are lower too.

Dentistry is a difficult, stressful occupation. Gaining a dental degree takes years of study and subsequent education never ceases. The working environment of the mouth is confined and mobile and patients pose not just technical challenges but people management ones as well. Whether dentists like it or not we probably need humour to view the world and ourselves in a balanced perspective.

Perhaps a guideline to survive our working day with reasonably happy patients and a level of job satisfaction might be 'Lets take the dentistry seriously, but ourselves a little less so'.

Accordingly...

DOE, A DEER, A FEMALE DEER

Christmas has come and gone and many of us are now trying to work off the extra kilos we packed on over the holiday break. Some are doing odd jobs in the garden and a few are venturing onto the roof to repair the tiles Santa's reindeer damaged skidding to a halt just when the kiddies were starting to doze off.

Even from a distance, Santa's sleigh will never be mistaken for a UFO and the reindeer, when parked on the roof, are not likely to be confused with a stray herd of jersey milkers.

Deer are always easy to pick because of their antlers...or are they?

The reindeer obviously graze around the North Pole and so, for them, Christmas falls in the northern winter. Male reindeer actually shed their antlers in autumn, while the females lose theirs in spring.

It really means that those animals with the antlers that infringed aerial safety last December were not reindeer but in fact *reindoe*.

Furthermore, Rudolph seems to have a **major** identity crisis.

We apologise for these revelations and trust they do not lead to too much disenchantment, especially amongst our more sentimental readers.

Christmas will remain essentially the same, children will still leave out cake for Santa and no doubt Rudolf, despite her personal confusion, will still lead the does. What is more, we will continue to sing Christmas carols – it is just that in future we may have to broaden the repertoire. What about – ***Somewhere, over by the Reindoe...***



LIFE'S MYSTERIES

There are many mysteries in this world. Where do the possums go during the daytime? How did NASA fake the moon landings? Why do my golf balls always end up in the trees?

Here are some more mysteries that have been solved.

Loch Ness harbours a dark secret, but it is not a monster. The secret is the monster is a hoax. Interest in the creature peaked in 1934 when *The Daily Mail* published an iconic photo of what looked like a sea serpent. The source of the picture was unattributed but rumour suggested a London doctor, hence its popular title 'The Surgeon's Photograph.' Gynaecologist, Robert Kenneth Wilson, was subsequently identified as the creator and years later confessed to the details behind the deception.



The image of the monster is simply that of a wooden toy being towed by a piece of string. If one carefully studies the ripples and the background of the original larger photograph it is apparent the creature is only a few feet long. Mundane but true.

Flying saucers are of a similar vein. They did not appear until the 1940s. Prior to then there were sightings of UFOs, but they always appeared to be rocket ships, as everyone knew that was the only way to travel through space.

In 1947, a commercial pilot reported seeing what may have been other planes. His comments were completely misquoted. "These objects more or less fluttered like boats on rough water. I said they flew like you take a saucer and throw it across the water." Since then the rockets disappeared and people started seeing flying saucers instead.



The Himalayan Yeti *may* be more real. He is usually reported as ape-like or humanoid, but it is hard to imagine any distant cousin of ours not stepping indoors from the cold. Apart from pictures of footprints there has never been any photographic evidence of the creature.

Recently though, a pelt of unknown origin, found in the Himalayan snow, has been examined for DNA and found to match that of prehistoric bears from the arctic circle.

If bears did inhabit the Himalayans, they would not require the short hind legs today's polar bears use for swimming and clambering onto icebergs. Indeed, evolving longer hind legs and walking upright would be advantageous negotiating deep snow. Furthermore, they would most likely have evolved to be large in order to retain body heat.

A monstrously big white bear walking upright through the snow would probably have looked vaguely human and certainly pretty 'abominable'. I would not say that to his face, though.

THE URI GELLER TOOTHBRUSH

Most of our patients clean conscientiously but struggle to remove plaque from the less accessible areas of the mouth. The lingual of the lower incisors is a common trouble spot. Brushing will be easier if the brush is held across the palm, at a right angle, and the elbow raised to shoulder level.



If there is still a problem, here is a special solution.

Suggest buying a second toothbrush. Have the patient carefully pour a little boiling water over its neck and bend the head to a 45° angle. The new brush will be awkward for cleaning most of the mouth but efficient for the inside of the lower teeth.

But why the 'Uri Geller brush'?

In the 1980s Israeli illusionist Uri Geller regularly bent spoons on stage and TV shows, supposedly using special psychic powers.

Other magicians did the same thing but had the honesty to admit the performance was a trick. Geller claimed the hocus pocus was genuine and went on to make millions of dollars.

Don't ask anyone to bend a toothbrush using the power of the mind, just a steady hand and a little boiling water. Then let them turn their mind to better brushing.

ALL WELCOME

This column will publish the odd piece of humour but it also aspires to becoming an informal forum for dental problem solving, rather like a hard copy segment of social media. Many dentists read the *News Bulletin*, do not use Facebook but are keen to share ideas, ask and receive advice. Readers are invited to send in questions, pose problems and likewise offer suggestions and ideas. Anecdotes and observations, serious or otherwise, will also be very welcome. Pseudonyms may be used to protect the innocent.

To start the aerator spinning here are some issues that continue to vex dentists' minds:

How do you:

- Place reliable restorations in non carious cervical cavities?
- Achieve tight interproximal contacts when cavities in posterior teeth extend well buccally and/or lingually?
- Restore teeth when cavitation extends subgingivally and gums are bleeding?

Incidentally, Mark Twain also said, 'All generalisations are false, including this one.' Make of that what you will.



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