HASLAM'S VIEW



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What made you choose your practice?

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED ABOUT WHERE THE 'SLIDING DOORS' MOMENTS were in your life? In case you missed it, *Sliding Doors* was an intriguing 1998 movie that showed how tiny, seemingly inconsequential moments can completely alter the trajectories of our lives.

Most of my long career in general practice can be traced back to an event which happened late one morning several decades ago.

I was coming towards the end of my trainee year and looking for a practice to join. This was a period, like today, when there were more general practices looking for doctors than doctors available to fill them – very much a buyer's market. As a result, I had already rejected a couple of possible places as being unsuitable when I went for an interview at the practice where I ended up working.

Interviews at the start of my career could not have been more different from how they are organised today. Back then, most GP practice interviews included an agonising 'trial by sherry', in which the applicant – plus spouse – were invited to join the existing doctors in the practice for drinks, and for an informal 'chat'.

After one of these 'trials by sherry' at a very attractive practice in a delightful part of the world, I thought the interview had gone swimmingly well and felt really keen to join. However, when my wife and I got back in our car to leave, even before I started the ignition she turned to me and announced that she never, ever wanted to be in a room with 'that man' ever again. The behaviour of the senior partner had made her feel deeply uncomfortable. So that was that.

After looking at several other practices which just didn't feel right, we eventually went to look at one small rural practice in an area I had never visited before. The sun was shining in a blue sky, and this very definitely put us in a good mood for the day.

'General practice is a team game and it matters that we treat each other with civility and kindness'

However, my Sliding Doors moment was a simple act of thoughtfulness. As we arrived at the practice, we were offered a quick cup of coffee with the partners and their wives (another sign of the times). Two of them then offered to babysit our young daughter while we went and explored the practice area to get a sense of where we were, and what the place was like.

That thoughtful offer had never happened anywhere else. We noticed, and felt, that these people were kind. These were people I could work with and this was somewhere we could feel settled.

So more than 30 years later I was still there. I've often wondered how different our lives would have been if that offer of babysitting hadn't been made. But perhaps what that offer symbolised was kindness and thoughtfulness.

Both those attributes matter hugely in any working relationship, probably far more than premises, academic brilliance, list size, workload, or income.

General practice is a team game, and whatever your role in the organisation it matters that we treat each other with civility and kindness.

After all, anyone working in frontline healthcare is going to have really tough days, particularly during this pandemic. It makes a big difference if you can work with people who are as thoughtful about you as they are about their patients.

The one problem with the concept of Sliding Doors moments is the idea that there is that single moment when everything in your life might have changed.

That's nonsense, of course. In reality, that possibility exists in every moment. And that is truly scary.

Tell us what you think?

If you want to share your experiences or views with other readers, write to: **editor@thepractitioner.co.uk**