HASLAM'S VIEW



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You don't have to be solemn to be serious

THIS IS MY FINAL HASLAM'S VIEW IN *THE PRACTITIONER*. I HAVE WRITTEN THIS COLUMN FOR an astonishing 26 years, since some time back in 1996. That's just under 300 columns.

As far as I can recall, I wrote those earliest columns on an Amstrad PCW word processor, a device that would now seem ludicrously primitive.

In those days I had to post the scripts to the editor by mail and store the backups on disks that are now entirely unreadable.

As a result, my copies are all gone. So I can't readily turn to those early columns in the way I can now to see every word I've written over the past couple of decades, safely stored on my Mac.

I will have written about how challenging general practice can be, how the decisions we make can be incredibly difficult, and how immensely worthwhile our role really is.

I have always tried to remember the motto that 'you don't have to be solemn to be serious'. In the grim face of much of the work GPs face in their day, there is still much humour.

The sheer humanity of the task is such a privilege, even at times like these when understandably most GPs feel overwhelmed with the pressures of the role.

Patients still turn to their GPs in times of need, when they are fearful, or stressed, or distressed, or distraught. General practice really matters.

'Dad had rows and rows of copies of *The Practitioner* stored on the bookshelves in the room where patients consulted him ...

My dad was a GP. He died when I was a young teenager, and I will never forget his funeral – the huge number of patients who came to say a silent thank you.

He was an immense inspiration to me and my career, and one of my abiding memories of him at work as a doctor involves *The Practitioner*.

In those days, the journal was published in A5 format, smaller and more compact than the current A4 format.

Dad had rows and rows of copies of *The Practitioner* stored on the bookshelves in his study, the room where patients consulted him, which was part of our family home.

They were the backdrop to every consultation.

After he died, I saved many of these and used them in my early years as a medical student.

Then, as now, they were rooted in the real world of real patients, and real practice.

The Practitioner really mattered to my dad. It has really mattered to me. Writing this column has been a joy.

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As I have written and said repeatedly over the years, good general practice is both central and critical to good healthcare.

Its future deserves to be very bright.

Tell us what you think?

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