HASLAM'S VIEW



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Should GPs moan about their patients?

I KNOW I'M NOT ALONE WHEN IT COMES TO MY PASSION FOR books. Over the years I've shared my enthusiasm with all manner of other GPs.

I can't begin to recall just how many conversations have included the words 'Have you read...?' which usually result in another trip to the local book shop for one of us, or that all too easy couple of clicks online.

One of the intriguing publishing sensations of the past few years has been the almost incessant stream of medical memoirs which turn up among the incredible tally of books published in the UK every year.

Perhaps these memoirs were kicked off by Henry Marsh's *Do No Harm*, followed by *With the End in Mind*, a fascinating book from palliative care consultant Kathryn Mannix, junior doctor Rachel Clarke's hard-hitting *Your Life in My Hands* and Adam Kay's best seller *This is Going to Hurt.*

However, I'm uncomfortable about the way a different genre of writing airs aspects of our dirty linen in public, to coin a phrase, when I read some other books and articles written by doctors for the general public about how they feel after seeing particular patients. Of course, the patients will have been suitably and totally anonymised.

I've never been one to hide from the reality of the stress of being a doctor. Indeed, some years ago I edited an entire book about stress in GPs, and I have often lectured and written about the challenges of what we do.

'I appreciate that some GPs can and do have a sinking feeling when they see certain names on their list'

I appreciate that some GPs can and do have a sinking feeling when they see certain names on their list. Others may feel intensely irritated by patients who bring more than one problem.

'Would I want my doctor to be a public moaner about me or other patients?'

While I understand and support the need for doctors to be able to share their experiences, frustrations, and irritations with each other, I'm much less happy with feelings about particular patients being shared in public.

Writing anonymised stories is fine, fascinating, and can be immensely entertaining and instructive. But moaning about your patients? After all, both you and I are also patients.

As far as I know, none of the doctors who have cared for me are writers. If they were, I know they would disguise identities when they wrote.

But would I want my doctor to be a public moaner about me or other patients?

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