



DEAR MEDICAL STUDENT

Advice from doctors
to medical students



Thank you to all the
BMA members who took the
time to contribute to this book.

We hope their words help you
find inspiration and perspective
throughout your studies.





Keep your eyes open, at supermarkets, train stations and airports. Pathology is all around you. Watch how patients walk, move, and rise from chairs and this will tell you as much as any physical examination.

Marcia Schofield
Pain specialist

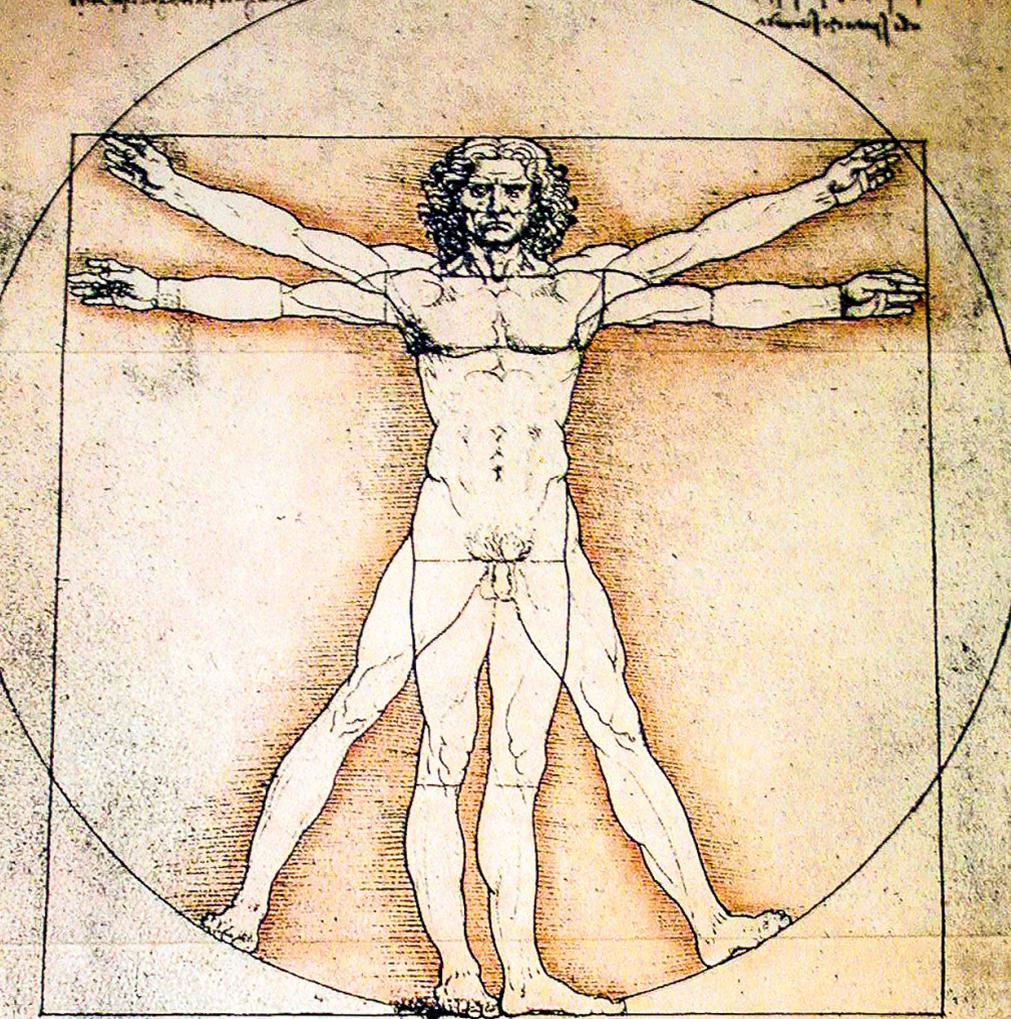
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Don't be afraid to take unexpected and unusual paths as your career progresses. And remember to be kind.

Michael Llewellyn
Retired

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Medicine is as much an art as it is a science. Continue to educate yourself through the arts and the humanities and you will be a much happier and better doctor.

Maria Turri
Consultant psychiatrist

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Think about the whole person and the patient as a member of a family with both older and younger members. Don't be afraid of empathy with patients. For yourself you need good shoes, sleep, good food and someone to talk to.

Leon Polnay
Emeritus professor of community paediatrics





Prepare for hard work and much tiredness. As a doctor you must be able, available, accessible and amiable – in that order. It is an all-consuming profession but you will get your fulfilment from your patients.

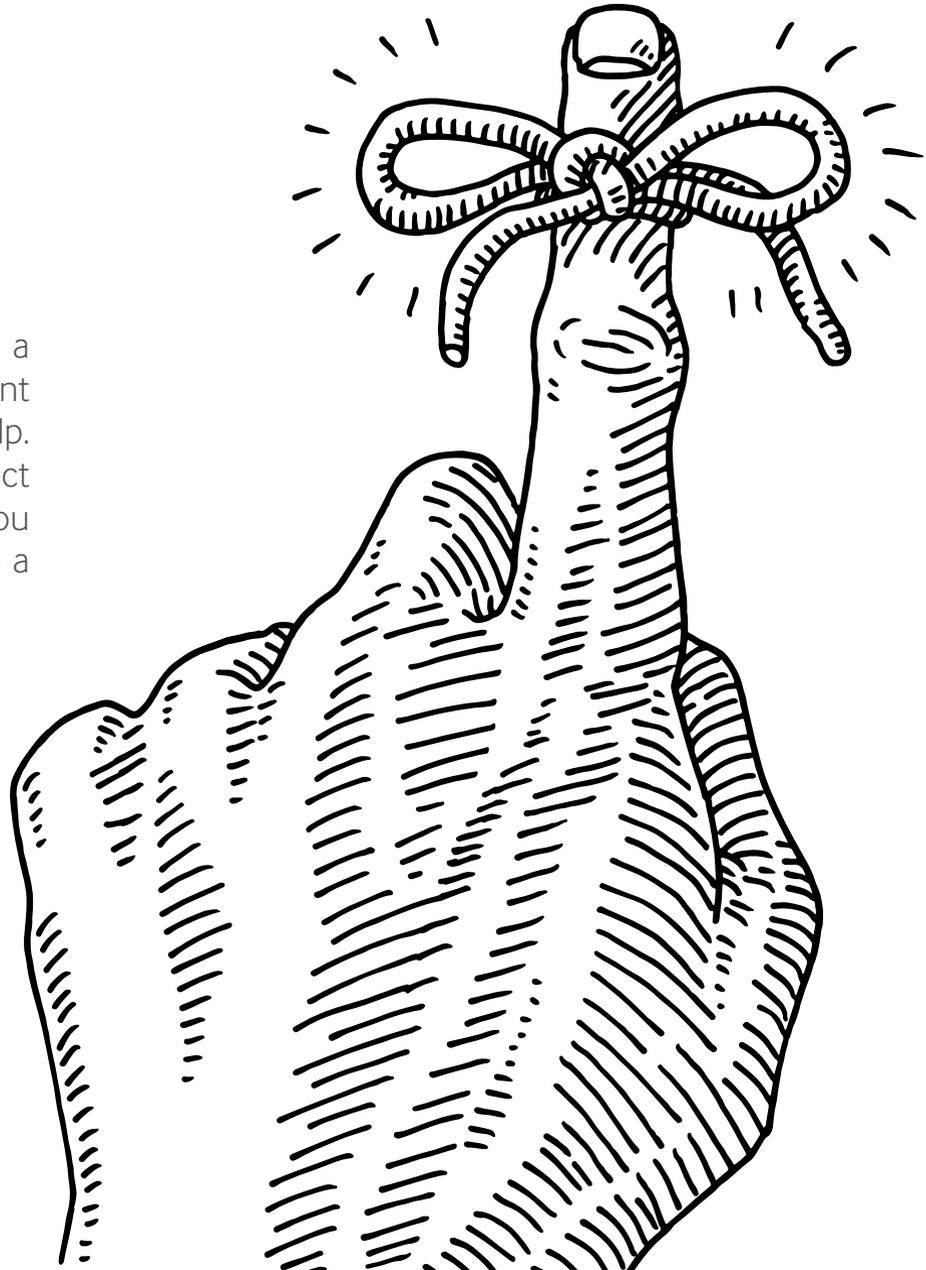
Lindy Cartner
Consultant haematologist (retired)

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Always remember that it is a privilege to interact with a patient that seeks your advice or help. Treat everyone with the respect they deserve and in the way you would wish to be dealt with in a similar situation.

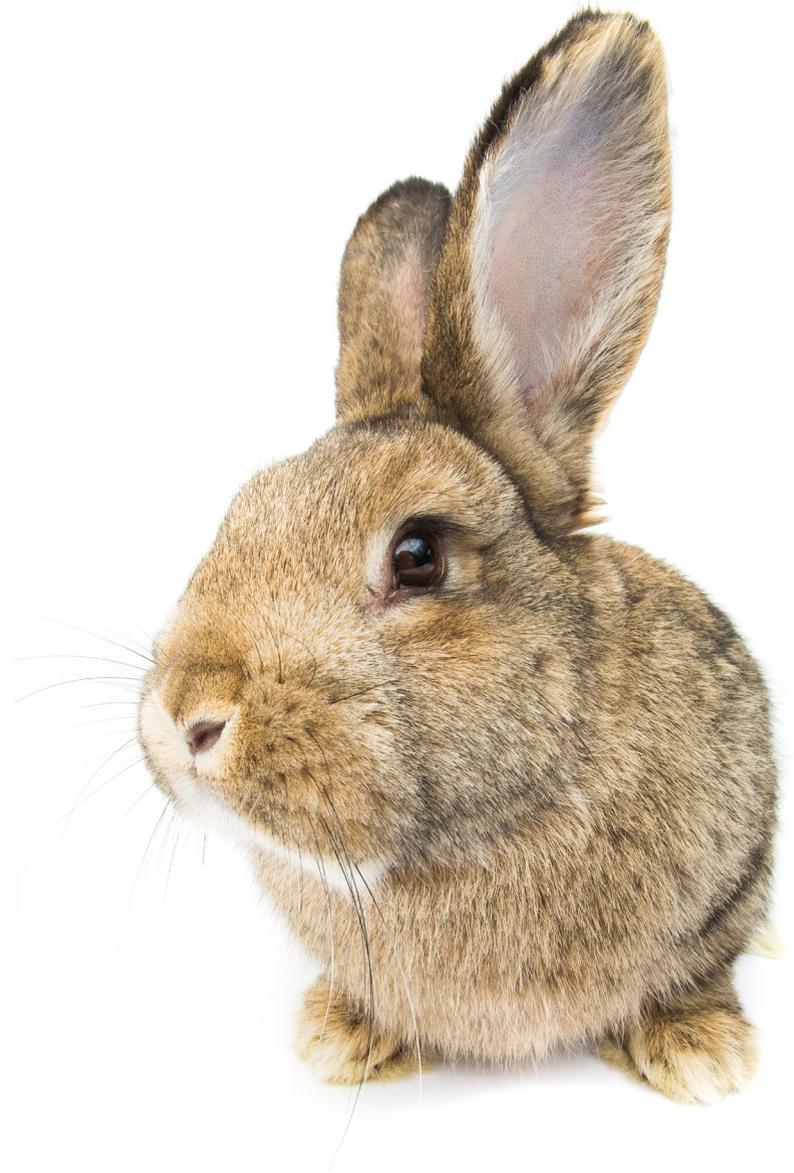
M S Nicholson
Paediatrician (retired)



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Be fascinated by all you learn, but remember there is a person in front of you with their hopes and fears. Listen to what they tell you, make sure they understand and can be involved in their care.

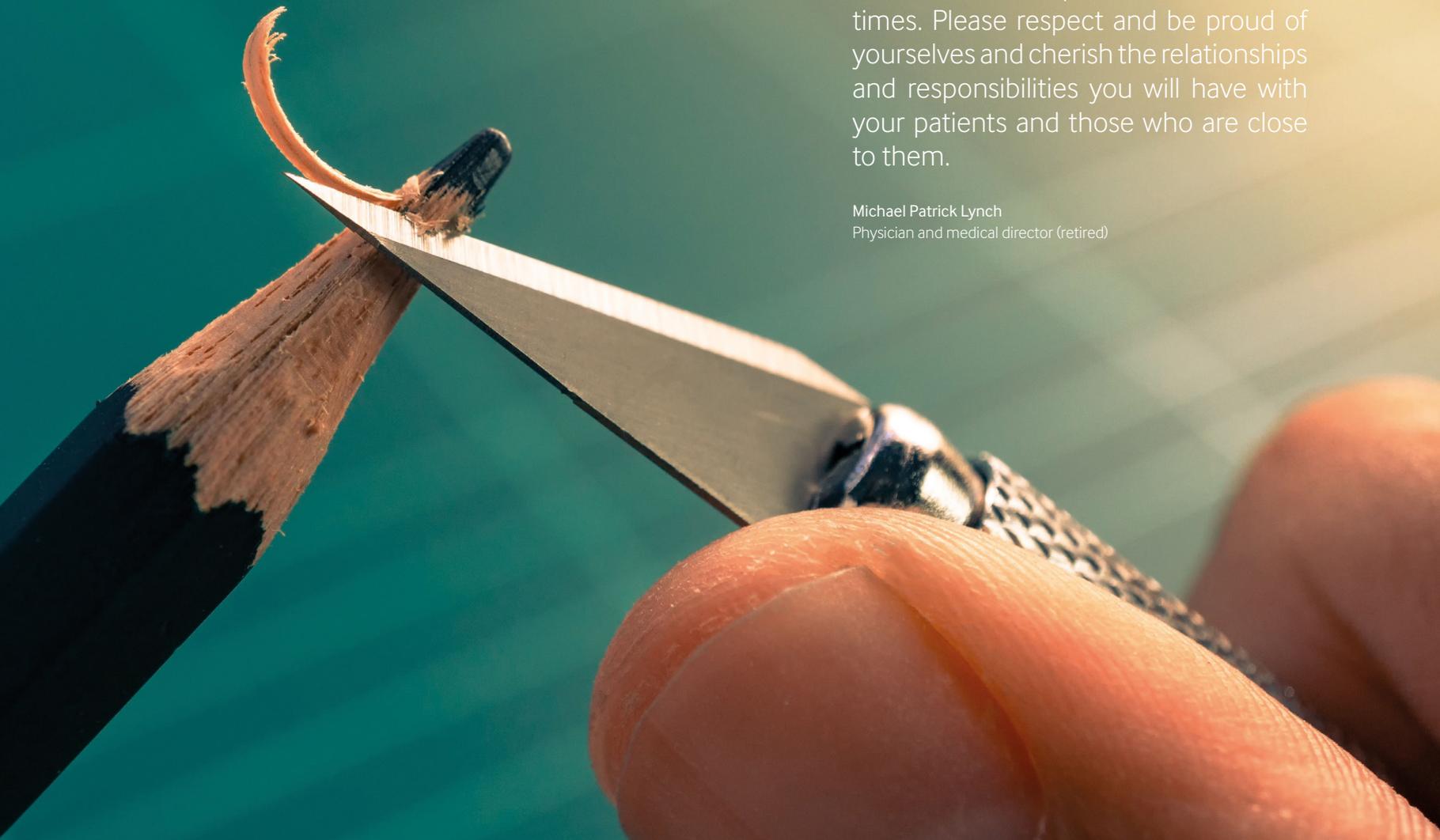
Natasha Usher
GP



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Maintain your skills and apply them with warmth and professionalism at all times. Please respect and be proud of yourselves and cherish the relationships and responsibilities you will have with your patients and those who are close to them.

Michael Patrick Lynch
Physician and medical director (retired)



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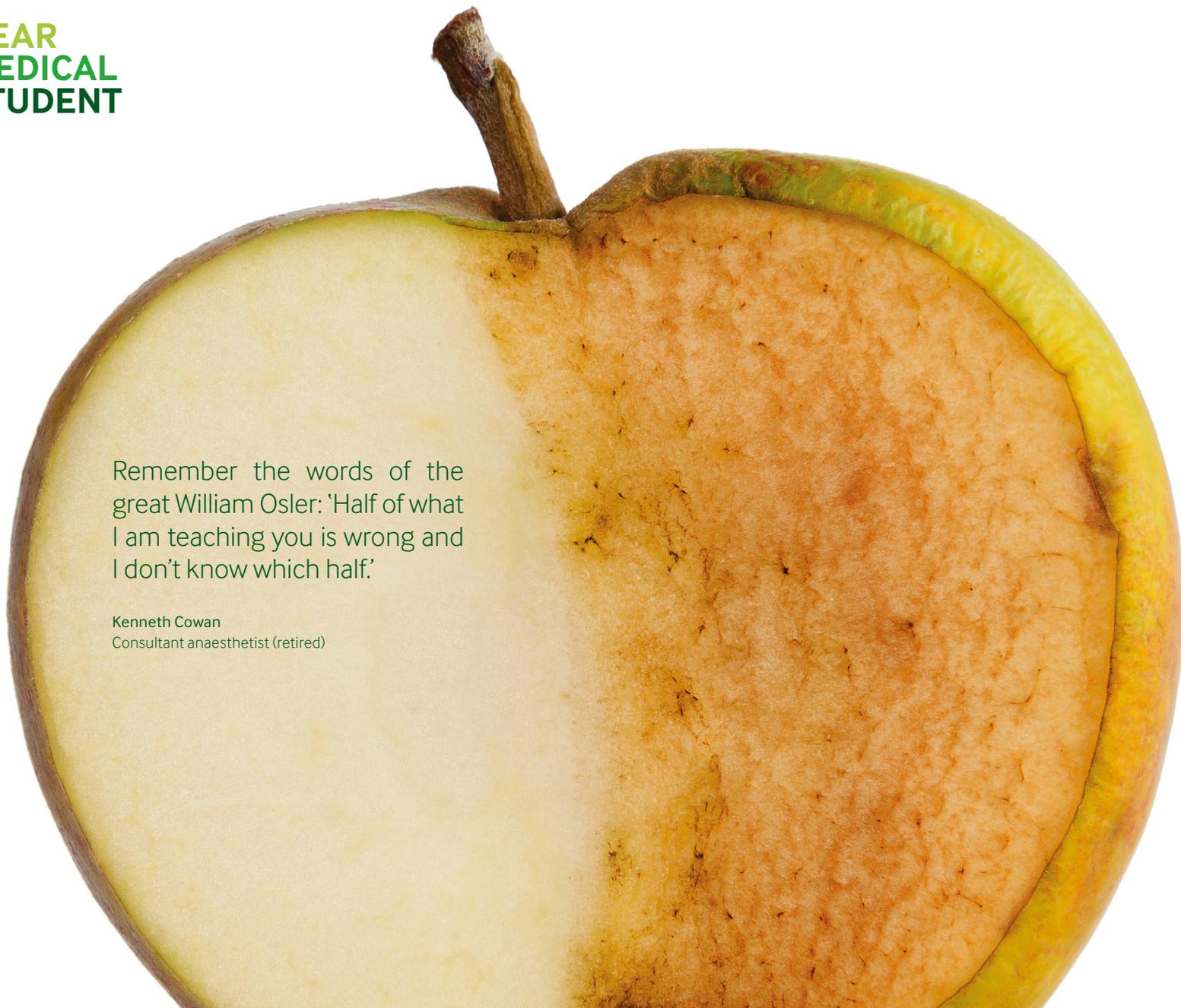
Medicine requires lifelong learning. Even today after 40 years I learn every day. Get in the habit of reading journals every week from your first day; start with editorials and reviews.

Nick Bateman
Consultant physician (retired)

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Remember the words of the great William Osler: 'Half of what I am teaching you is wrong and I don't know which half.'

Kenneth Cowan
Consultant anaesthetist (retired)



Never be afraid to discuss problems or patients confidentially with colleagues. It is all part of the learning process.

Lorna Sloan
GP (retired)



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Keep in touch with the arts to
widen your horizons.

Marion Miles
Paediatrician (retired)

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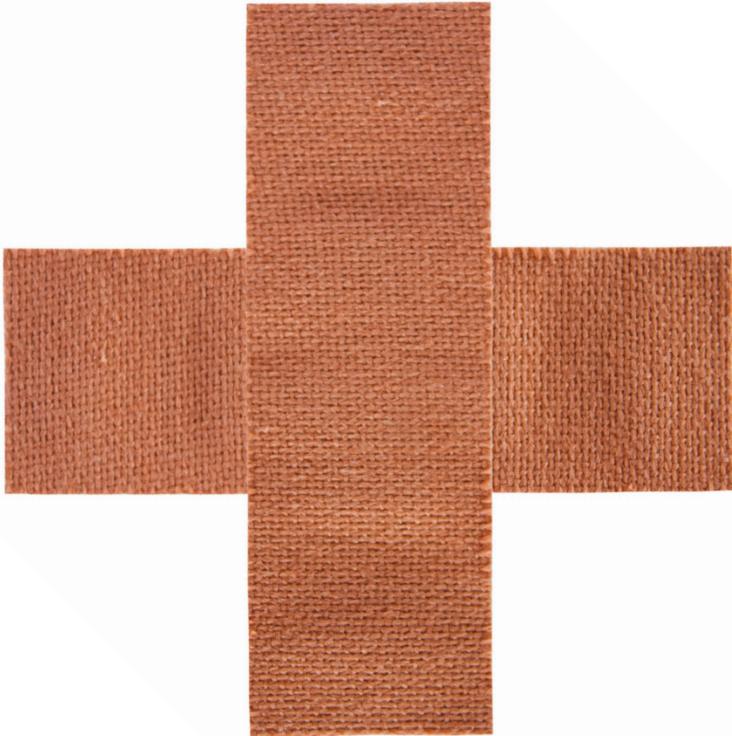
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Always carry a water bottle!

Melody Redman
ACFST2 paediatrics



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Never try and hide your mistakes. Everyone gets things wrong. What you do afterwards can turn a negative into a positive. Take responsibility and maximise the learning from them.

Michael Duncan
Consultant anaesthetist



Which medical school you went to doesn't matter **at all**. Rarely do we care once you start working. Are you a doctor? Are you willing to learn (and relearn all the stuff you've forgotten)? Crack on then and what you choose to do will make more of a difference than anything else.

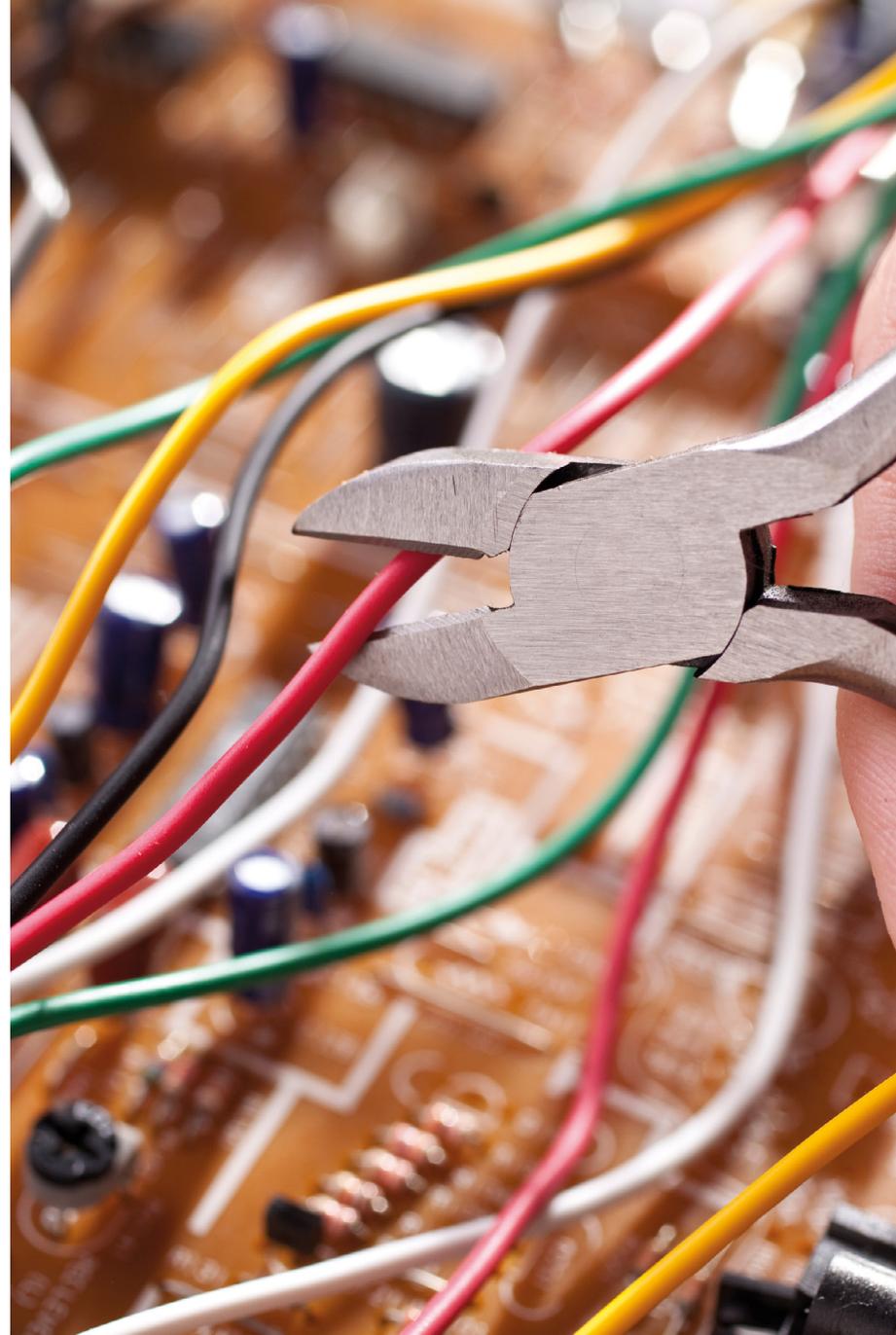
Peter Ellis
ST4 emergency medicine

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Never ignore a 'gut feeling'. Don't be afraid to share it with colleagues, no matter how 'junior' you are, or how 'senior' they are! One day a patient might be grateful for it!

Mike Lewis
GP (retired)



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to be best
point of view
Respect [ri'spe
show deferent
hold in
regard

Your patients are the best teachers
you can have; treat them with respect
and courtesy.

P N Haray
Consultant surgeon

Learn how to teach as well as how to be a medical professional. Value the good teachers and follow their example. You will learn as much teaching as you will observing and participating.

A good teacher is invaluable in medicine at whatever level. Good teaching is a lifelong skill and will bring to you as much pleasure as it will to those being taught well. Respect the learning needs of all.

Paxton Dewar
Consultant surgeon, examiner and 'teacher/trainer' (retired)



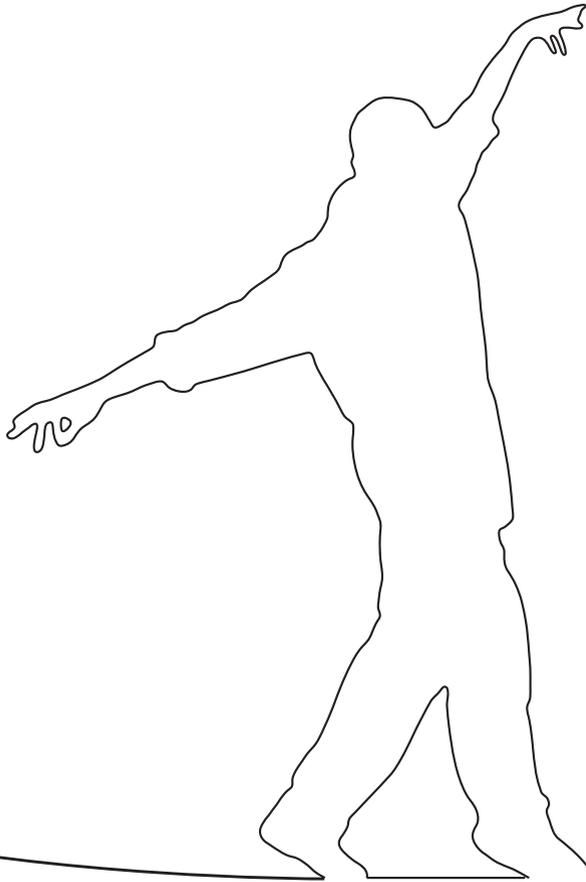
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Medical school is an unparalleled opportunity for learning and experience: go to all your lectures/labs/tutorials and say yes to all the chances you are offered. Most of them will never come again.

Penelope Jarrett
GP principal

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Dream, plan ahead, take a few risks, and don't believe all you are told. Try to do your elective (if you have one) somewhere resource poor as you will learn far more.

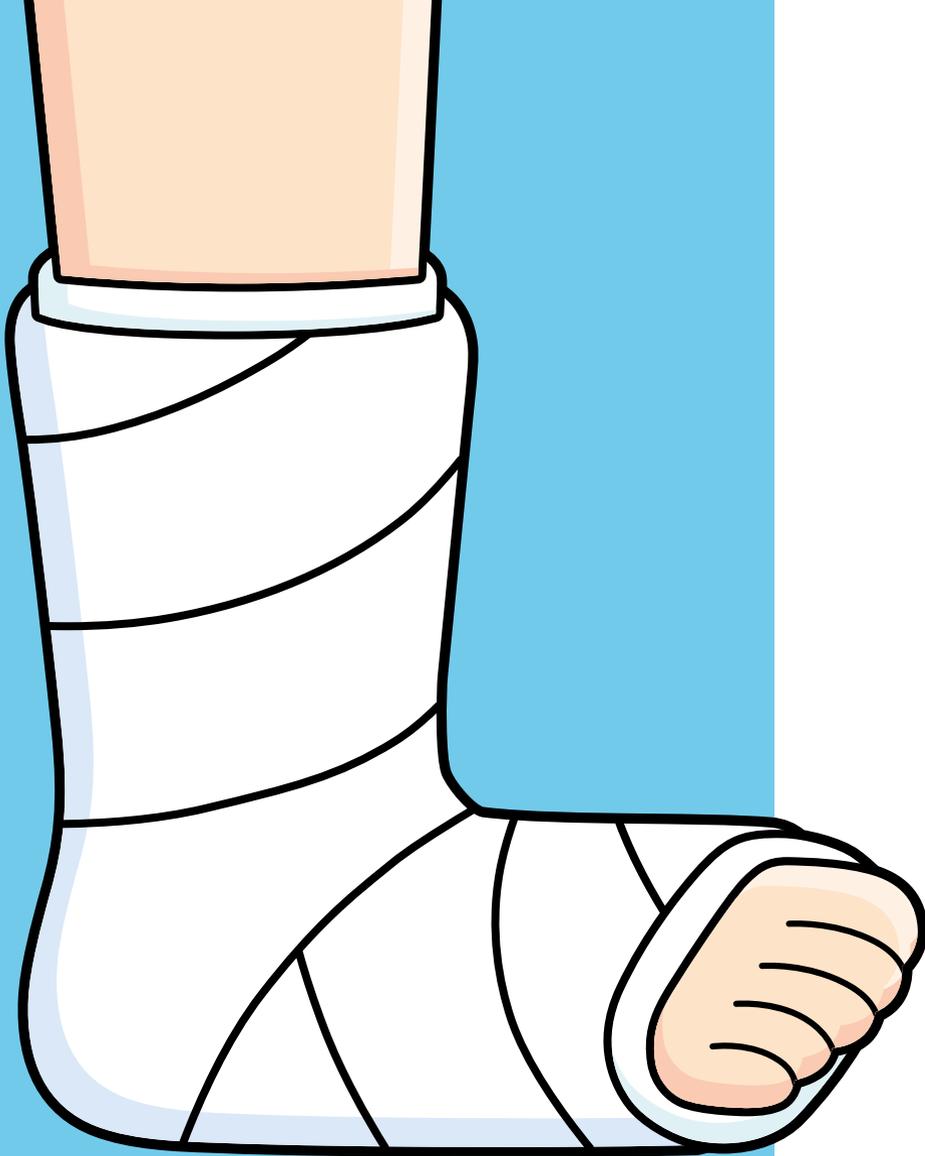
Phil Lacoux
Consultant anaesthetist



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Welcome to the start of an amazing career. Save something to remind you why you wanted to study medicine. You can get it out to look at if you need motivation. You also know it is there in the back of the cupboard giving you reason to carry on.

Philip Dawson
GP (retired)



Find your niche and enjoy it. You might be surprised what you choose. I knew that I didn't want to do A&E and tried to avoid it. Had to do it and loved it from day one. Now, 30 years later, I still love it. Look after yourself – life is a balance, you can have a great career without being a consultant.

Vicky Vella
Associate specialist (A&E)

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Don't go through medical school comparing yourself to others; they say comparison is the thief of joy. Work hard, do your best and at the end of the day, go and enjoy your passions outside of medicine.

Ramara Collins
F2 doctor



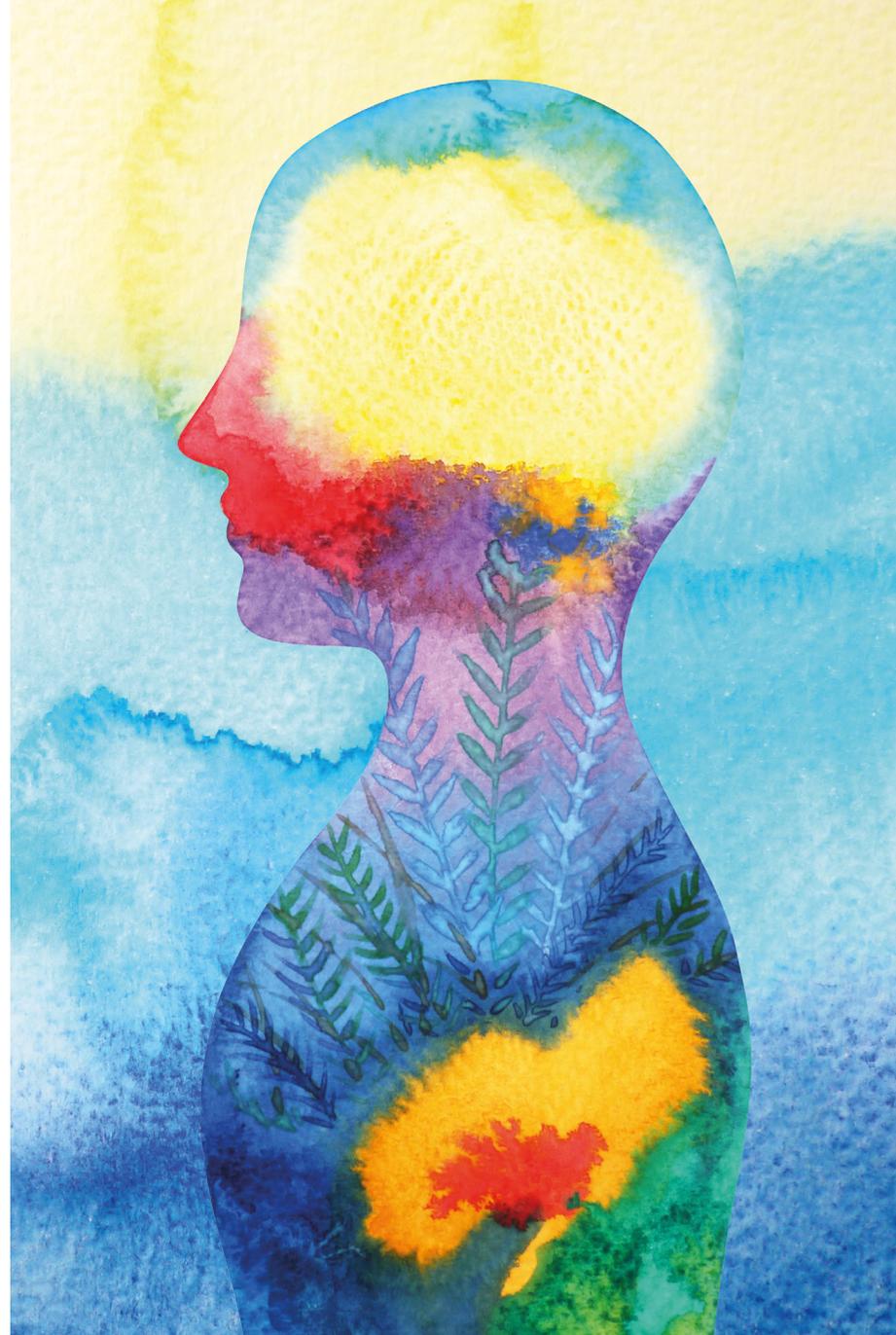
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Remember that the mind and body,
the mental and the physical, are wholly
integrated and that the art of medicine
is recognising individuality.

Richard Simpson

Professor/ex-GP/ex-psychiatrist/ex-public health minister





During your foundation years, try to learn as much as possible about the specialties you are **not** going to pursue. This will be the only chance before you enter specialist training.

Siten Roy
Orthopaedic consultant

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Try to plan some experiences abroad to broaden your perspective of how health and illness is dealt with away from the NHS.

Philip Meager
Medical adviser for Mekong and Thai fields
for OMF International



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Kindness is free, humility enables humanity and often the smallest acts make the biggest difference. In a system that seems so big and out of control (as the press would have you believe) the only thing you can control is yourself, therefore, react not respond and realise that you do belong, you have value and you will make a difference.

Sonia Joseph
Consultant paediatrician (ADME)





If you feel lonely or desperate or are losing hope, do not just turn in on yourself – seek help from whoever or whatever person or agency might be of help.

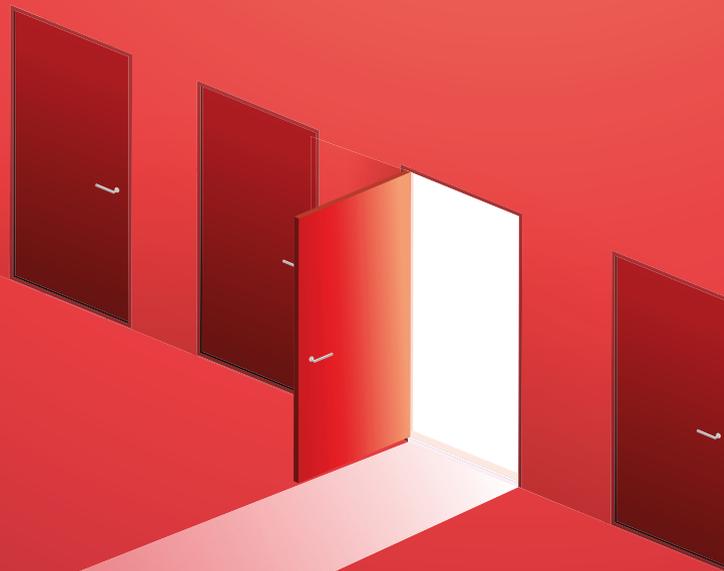
Stuart Dove
GP (retired)

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One fine day you'll be the one at the sharp end of difficult decisions that alter the course of people's lives. Learn how to save those that can be saved, but also to recognise and care for those that cannot. Be brave enough to be humane.

Tom
Anaesthetist



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Look after one another. The ups and downs throughout training affect all of us, particularly those you least expect. Be kind, be sensitive and keep smiling!

Rachel
Paediatric registrar



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