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High salt meals, p 1310



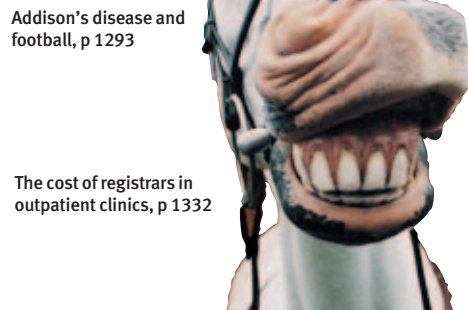
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## EDITOR'S CHOICE

## At the Christmas party

**No set of mutually inconsistent observations can exist for which some human intellect cannot conceive a coherent explanation, however complicated**

Welcome to the *BMJ's* Christmas party. Back after a few years' absence are the orthopaedic surgeons—boy were those guys *animals* in the old days (*BMJ* 1988;297:1638-9). Now they're flexing their muscles while attempting erudite jokes at the expense of the anaesthetists (p 1328). One of these turns on the difference between a joist and a girder (punchline: Joyce wrote *Ulysses*, Goethe wrote *Faust*).

James Joyce clearly doesn't get the joke, but he says it's given him an idea. Anything to take his mind off his new glasses (p 1295). Perhaps he can be coaxed into talking with the dead of Ambridge (p 1287), who are hunched over the hostess trolley, picking Jellytrics (p 1324) out of the ice cream.

The other Irishman at the party is in a bad way (p 1290). He's over 8 feet tall and keeps muttering about being locked up in a feckin museum. It's lucky John Hunter hasn't shown up, otherwise there really would have been blood on the walls. That would have made Occam's night (p 1301). Always on the lookout for a spot of aggro, he's waving his razor threateningly about. He might find something in common with the other ex-monk among the guests (p 1327).

As you'd expect, Sherlock Holmes is keeping a close professional eye on these events (p 1296). A regular he may be, but his unrepentant pipesmoking is really getting up people's noses.

Brian Jones and Kurt Cobain are in a corner trying to agree a variant of Groucho Marx's claim that he didn't want to be a member of any club that would have him as a member (p 1284). Nevertheless, they seem slightly miffed that Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, and Jim Morrison haven't shown up.

A bored Amy Winehouse strays over to Beethoven, who clearly can't hear a word she's saying (p 1298). A fruitless discussion about high notes ensues.

The Physicians from the Hospital for Consumption (despite their name, not a rock group) are asking if anyone's brought any cod liver oil (p 1305).

Earlier on there had been a scuffle in the hall, and the sound of gruff male voices. Hints of a Manchester accent? A discarded syringe was found, but later testing showed that it had contained only hydrocortisone (p 1293).

Everyone is avoiding party bore, Ivar Ingimundarson, the Icelandic poet who's going on and on about how his brother ran off with his fiancée (p 1312). Everyone that is except Eysteinn, known as The King in Norway, if not in Memphis. Neither has a clue who Björk is.

Richard Smith is halfway through a monologue on the evils of denying death—largely redundant for this crowd (p 1277). Those few for whom death remains a live issue are being stalked by the grim reaper, circling the periphery at a steady 1.8 mph (p 1282).

Oblivious to the threat, first time invitees Waldemar Ingdahl (p 1280) and Steve Reed (p 1317) are deep in conversation. It seems they're plotting a mashup of *Pirates of the Caribbean* and *Lisa of Lambeth*, provisionally entitled *Pirates of Lambeth*.

Unusually, it's been an alcohol free event this year (p 1318)—doubly a shame as the Dutch party food is oversalted (p 1310). Continuing the continental theme is the Italian party entertainer. She's performing some complicated manoeuvres involving her arms, to general amazement (p 1336).

The last word goes to Joseph Crabtree, who appropriately, given the occasion, doesn't technically exist (p 1301). "No set of mutually inconsistent observations can exist for which some human intellect cannot conceive a coherent explanation, however complicated," he mumbles, before he passes out.

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