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## Corrections and clarifications

### *Why does NICE not recommend laparoscopic herniorrhaphy?*

We wrongly transferred an amendment from the proofs in this article by Roger W Motson (4 May, pp 1092-4), resulting in a nonsensical sentence. The penultimate sentence in the second paragraph of the section "Telling patients the options" should read: "They [laparoscopic surgeons] would further explain that if the patient [with a primary hernia] was unfit for general anaesthesia then they would be limited to open operation under local anaesthetic."

### *Informed consent for genetic research on blood stored for more than a decade: population based study*

In redrafting the line drawing in this article by Birgitta Stegmayr and Kjell Asplund (21 September, pp 634-5), we inadvertently reversed the numbers given for the participants who wanted to be contacted before every new research project in which their blood sample was intended to be used and those who did not want to be contacted (bottom left in figure). The figure should have shown that 202 participants wanted to be contacted, and 1019 did not.

## A memorable patient A crucial statement

One day in early spring Mrs S, a longstanding and familiar patient in the clinic, consulted for cat bites, which had occurred that same morning. She told me (MM) that, without any warning, the cat had jumped on her, scratched her, and bitten her in the right arm. She had already visited the local health authority, which had told her that she didn't need any vaccination. She also told me that our nurse had disinfected and bandaged the wound.

She looked quite bewildered, and when I checked her I noticed that on her right arm she had several deep scratches and numerous bite wounds. It was as if the cat had gone berserk. Knowing that cat wounds can be very deep, I prescribed an antibiotic and sent her home. At the same time, I mentioned that it might be better to get rid of such a ferocious cat, to which she nodded affirmatively.

When she returned three days later I noticed that the wounds were not looking any better, and I changed the treatment. I asked her if she had got rid of the cat, to which she replied, "Not yet." And then she started to explain that it had all been her fault anyway: On the day she'd been bitten a female cat in heat had been howling in the courtyard, and her own cat had got very excited. Wound up by sexual frustration, he had jumped on her when she entered the room.

Gradually her arm got better, and whenever she visited me I would ask if she had got rid of the cat. Yet she would reply, "No, I love him. I just can't get rid of him. He is always so good to me; He has never hurt me. It is not his fault. In fact, it was my fault entirely. If I hadn't disturbed him, he'd never have jumped on me.

This is the first time that such a thing has happened, and I'm sure he'll never do it again. He is such a good cat."

To me, her words seemed very strange in the light of the trauma that she had experienced when she first consulted me about the wounds. I said to her: "You know, you relate to this crazy cat exactly as battered women relate to their partners. You use the same words, you express the same guilt feelings, and you're still convinced you love him and believe that he'll never hurt you again."

She then looked at me with a look that was indecipherable.

The next visit was much sooner than expected. She walked into my room, closed the door, sat down, and said, "You know, doctor, when my husband hits me it hurts less than the wounds inflicted by my cat."

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We welcome articles up to 600 words on topics such as *A memorable patient*, *A paper that changed my practice*, *My most unfortunate mistake*, or any other piece conveying instruction, pathos, or humour. If possible the article should be supplied on a disk. Permission is needed from the patient or a relative if an identifiable patient is referred to. We also welcome contributions for "Endpieces," consisting of quotations of up to 80 words (but most are considerably shorter) from any source, ancient or modern, which have appealed to the reader.