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Cite this as: *BMJ* 2021;375:n3082
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n3082>

Published: 16 December 2021

CHRISTMAS 2021

Pure imagination

Helen Macdonald *clinical editor*

These are extraordinary times. Although the scenes reflected in this year's Christmas baubles might be distorted or dulled by the pandemic, we hope to provide some comfort, sparkle, and space to imagine a better future. Inside this issue you'll find David Robertson and Peter Doshi wondering how we'll know that the pandemic has ended (doi:10.1136/bmj-2021-068094),¹ while Agnes Arnold-Forster conjures utopias from the aftermath of cataclysmic events (doi:10.1136/bmj.n2892),² encouraging readers to think big to create a better world.

Readers in need of escapism can ponder the lessons learnt from head injuries in nursery rhyme characters (doi:10.1136/bmj-2021-068256)³ or the health of ageing superheroes (doi:10.1136/bmj-2021-068001).⁴ Feast your eyes on a traditional Christmas table and spot the toxic seasonal botanicals (doi:10.1136/bmj-2021-066995),⁵ click the QR codes to hear what gout and other conditions might sound like (doi:10.1136/bmj-2021-068240),⁶ and read Greta Bauer's wildly duplicitous scheme for publishing poor research (doi:10.1136/bmj-2021-067350).⁷ Her infographic might help you evaluate whether second to fourth finger digit ratio is associated with luck when playing poker (doi:10.1136/bmj-2021-067849)⁸ or whether the density of heavy metal bands in a population is correlated with death (doi:10.1136/bmj-2021-067633).⁹ Juan Franco and Santiago Esteban demystify chance findings and artificial intelligence (doi:10.1136/bmj.n2915).¹⁰

Behind data are people, and empathy is as important in clinical research as in medicine. Among some trial participants, hope is treasured (doi:10.1136/bmj-2021-066851),¹¹ but Christmas cards from their trial organisers proved less so (doi:10.1136/bmj-2021-067742).¹² We can provide better care if we put ourselves in colleagues' shoes, as a GP and a consultant learnt when they traded places (doi:10.1136/bmj.n3005),¹³ as did other clinicians who reflect here on their "covid careers" (doi:10.1136/bmj.n2762).¹⁴ Those redeployed to intensive care might have found it a "smidge" easier to navigate using James Hodgetts and colleagues' slang dictionary for new starters—a reminder that clear language can make medicine safer and more inclusive (doi:10.1136/bmj-2021-067900).¹⁵

Many clinicians want to change lives for the better, especially those working in Afghanistan with Médecins Sans Frontières, which is where your donations to *The BMJ's* annual appeal will go this year (doi:10.1136/bmj.n3004).¹⁶

Sometimes you have to think outside the box to change the world. The hip hop artist Logic released a song about mental health struggles, using a US

helpline number for its title. Social media activity around the song saw increased calls to the number, which were associated with a reduction in suicide (doi:10.1136/bmj-2021-067726).¹⁷ His song of hope illustrates how the creative arts can support people in mental distress (doi:10.1136/bmj.n2964).¹⁸

Fiona Godlee talks about her time as editor in chief of *The BMJ* as she steps down after more than 16 years (doi:10.1136/bmj.n2986),¹⁹ and you can hear the full interview on our podcast (<https://bit.ly/BMJInterview>). Thanks, Fi, for your vision and leadership.

Lastly, few things are as simple, seasonal, or wonderful as giving and receiving thanks (doi:10.1136/bmj.n2816).²⁰ Join our campaign on Twitter to thank the people who have been supportive through the pandemic (#bmjcovidthanks): this may be the seasonal boost healthcare professionals need most as they prepare for what 2022 will bring.

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