It seems that there are more reasons to despair than ever in 2022. However, 40 years since the first Christmas issue of The BMJ, we aim to give you comfort, as health professionals struggle to cope with the unrelenting demands placed on health services. Few things are as steadying as a hot drink and a biscuit. With busier shifts and rising numbers of patients it can be hard for staff to find time to refuel. Dunking a biscuit (or cookie, if you prefer) in a hot cup of tea helps it cool more quickly, ensuring that there’s always time for a satisfying tea break (doi:10.1136/bmj-2022-072839). Providing refreshments free of charge would be a cost effective way for employers to boost staff morale (doi:10.1136/bmj-2022-072846).

Comfort is also found in the solidarity and camaraderie of hardworking and dedicated colleagues, for whom artificial intelligence is surely no substitute (doi:10.1136/bmj-2022-072826, doi:10.1136/bmj-02853). We highlight unsung heroes whose efforts historically go unnoticed despite their invaluable contribution to patient care (doi:10.1136/bmj-02842, doi:10.1136/bmj-02774). Not only should these colleagues be seen but they deserve to be fully recognised (doi:10.1136/bmj-03017).

Some of us are sustained by exercise. Participants in a study of exercises delivered in the style of an Advent calendar (doi:10.1136/bmj-2022-072807), with one new exercise to do each day for 24 days, engaged in more minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise than the control group (doi:10.1136/bmj-2022-072807).

Since humans have evolved to move in streamlined, energy conserving ways, a counterintuitive method to improve cardiovascular fitness—and perhaps release more endorphins—is to maximise the inefficiency of movement (doi:10.1136/bmj-2022-072833). Tapping into our competitive side by doing an online typing speed test might give a similar buzz (doi:10.1136/bmj-2022-072784).

Another comforter is the daily ritual of solving a puzzle, such as a cryptic crossword (doi:10.1136/bmj-02971). In 2023 The BMJ is launching a daily interactive online word game to test your clinical knowledge. “Clinicle” will begin on 1 January, and a new puzzle will be released each day in January. If it proves popular, we may continue.

Taking definitive steps for change (doi:10.1136/bmj-2022-072288)—such as by donating blood (doi:10.1136/bmj-2022-074148), placing kindness at the heart of interactions with patients (doi:10.1136/bmj-2022-073444), or supporting humanitarian efforts (doi:10.1136/bmj-02898)—is certainly consoling, but the greatest comfort, as we complete a year that has placed unbearable burdens on health services and professionals, is knowing that each of us is playing our part in striving for a healthier world.

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15 Feinmann J. Tackling the aftermath of Pakistan’s record floods. BMJ 2022;379. doi: 10.1136/bmj-c0898. pmid: 36521871