

Articles you will never read

I am sad as this is my last article. The last Learning Curve written by me. I have been writing this column for more than 10 years and have enjoyed every moment. I will be eternally grateful to *Eye News* for giving me this privilege and I wish my successor, whoever they may be, all the success in the world in continuing this column.

Many hours were spent thinking about what to write here. I considered writing about *Eye News* as a magazine, what it feels like handing over and the future of ophthalmology. Those would have in fact been very boring things to write about though, so I thought I would list the articles I wrote but never submitted, as a sort of insight into the workings of my mind and a form of testament to what could have been but never was.

So, first in the list of unsubmitted articles was a long list of all the reasons that we should refuse to treat any patients who were regular readers of the *Daily Mail*. I didn't submit that as I had got into trouble years ago for writing about how patients bringing *Daily Mail* cutouts to clinic should be burnt alive in a big pyre of newspaper clippings in the waiting room. Then I thought about a follow-up to my Brexit article stating how it was now even more clear that Brexiteers were total morons, but as the first article had caused upset in my family, I decided a follow-up would be fuel on the fire, even if it is true. Especially as it is true.

I wrote an article in the wake of nationwide hysteria amongst the young following the killing of George Floyd and the baffling response of local medical students submitting an extraordinarily naïve letter to the medical school about our own failings in keeping up to date with the eternal struggle against paper tigers everywhere. In that article I had written about how my initial anger at this attack at a time of COVID-19 stress might even indicate that I, myself, was the true snowflake. That the notion that middle-class British-Asian doctors were in any way disadvantaged in the grand scheme of things was obscene. But a whole number of friends convinced me, almost certainly correctly, not to submit that one.

Likewise, there was a long rant about the loss and corruption of socialist principles in the NHS that I thought best not to submit, mainly as it had a detailed critique of Sir Keir Starmer, in it that might have caused

the *Eye News* editors to panic a bit. I feel sorry for the stress that I caused Tariq and Bal already and thought it best to reduce as much as possible any future controversy. It was a difficult job requiring many revisions to get the article about the corrupting influence of Drug Reps through and I didn't want to push my luck. The article criticising Any Qualified Provider developments in cataract surgery that involved calling those collaborators Quislings and worse I never even finished, let alone submitted. I know my limits. I considered imagery directly drawn from the film *Fight Club* where SpaMedica complexes were systematically demolished in controlled explosions would probably be too much for *Eye News*.

The long and frankly boring treatise I wrote comparing the modern NHS to the late Roman Republic I thought would just put people to sleep. Plus, I had only written that because I had so enjoyed Mary Beard's *SPQR* and the true similarities were not so different to the book written by Mark Corrigan (David Mitchell's character) *Business Secrets of the Pharaohs on Peep Show*. I thought about writing about how I hate the people who go to lectures then take pictures of every single slide. In fact, that article I had started but had to stop due to the violent imagery. I wrote about how pointless the title of 'Professor' is nowadays, and how everyone should laugh at anyone calling themselves 'Professor' unironically. Lastly, I had written an article about the Troy McClures of ophthalmology turning up at every industry event for a fee ("Hi I'm Troy McClure; you may remember me from such events as 'Faricimab: the drug of the future', 'Eylea: our tried and trusted friend' and 'Help! I need something for my dry AMD!'") and how we should lose respect for these people rather than continuously praising them for selling out so effectively. All these are unsubmitted and I have spared you my ranting. I hope you are grateful.

This is my last article. I am grateful for the correspondence I have received over the years and hope you will continue to correspond with my successor. I have had many messages from those agreeing with what I wrote as well as those opposing. Of all the articles, the one about Unconscious Bias I am most proud of. I probably had more negative responses to that single article than all the others combined. But also, the most positive.

My having written this column was directly responsible for a regular reader coming to Swansea to work as a locum glaucoma consultant. He was a hell of an interesting chap, and I was sorry when he left. Who knows if any others were put off from coming as a result? I was sorely tempted to write more about my city, my country, and the Independence Movement of which I am a part but thought it would not be relevant to my non-Welsh colleagues, and was not really ophthalmic in nature either. My article about the sheer unadulterated pointlessness of a medical education qualification I thought about writing so many times but in the end did not, mainly as I thought it might negatively affect my chances of passing that very same qualification which I was hypocritically taking.

Thanks to Tariq Aslam and Diana Spencer. Both have left *Eye News* but their support was instrumental for me and I wish their successors all the best in carrying on the difficult task of keeping *Eye News* at the very limit, the neovascular frond if you like, of cutting-edge ophthalmic opinion. Thanks also to Charis Stewart and Stuart Aitken, the unsung heroes of *Eye News*, in charge of making all kinds of corrections and improvements to the nonsense I have sent to them over the years. I will miss writing for the magazine more than anyone can ever know, but please believe me when I say that it has been the best part of being an ophthalmologist for me and if I could do it all again, I certainly would!

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SECTION EDITOR



Gwyn Samuel Williams,
Consultant Ophthalmologist, Singleton Hospital,
Swansea, UK.
gwynwilliams@doctors.org.uk