

We have liftoff!

Anyone who regularly writes or reviews for the *MJA* will know that, halfway through this year, we launched ourselves into the world of electronic submission and peer review. If the editors were catapulted kicking and screaming into the orbit of our new system, we can only imagine how our contributors feel. However, as we all adjust to the thin atmosphere and weightless state up here, we have to admit that it is a fine thing to have all the manuscripts “virtually” at our fingertips. Like astronauts viewing the world from afar, we can see the overall shape of things and can zoom down on the detail at the stroke of a key. Hopefully, this small step for the editors will be a giant step for the speed and efficiency of the *MJA*.

Perhaps because of this innovation, there were slightly fewer submissions for this year's Christmas Competition than in previous years. However, the quality was very high (undoubtedly both tenacity and a sense of humour are assets in the new submission process). Encouragingly, the contributors came from a range of medical specialties — surgeons, psychiatrists, anaesthetists, physicians, emergency physicians, a corgi and even a geriatrician among them — proving that you can teach both the old and a dog new tricks.

For judging this year, the entries were posted on the outside south-western wall of “The pod” (see picture), an oval corrugated structure which functions as the *MJA*'s boardroom and space probe. Such public placement, under the joint scrutiny of our communications manager and librarian, precluded the usual tricks such as vote tampering, multiple voting and ghost voting.

As usual, every entry received at least one nomination, reflecting the eclectic tastes and diverse interests of the *MJA* staff. In the image category, there was much support for the symbolism of Velakoulis et al's iconic MRI “findings” (page 679), and the sheer freakishness of James and colleagues' account of an elderly couple's matching flank haematomas (page 626). However, the prize (two bottles of premium Australian wine) goes to Riley and

Sallie, for “Finding inner peace” (page 677), an important colonoscopic image that should be sent without delay to all world leaders.

Entries in the written category, which also carries a prize of two bottles of wine, were, on the whole, disturbing. Among the offerings were studies on the health benefits of ambulance diversion (Fatovich, page 672) and the impact of the weather on emergency department attendances (Ou et al, page 675), and dissertations on the disease states of popular characters in children's fiction (McCallum and Smith, page 670) and the contents of Nair's inbox (page 674). Ultimately, we were most moved by Cobcroft and Pembroke-Corgi's earthy account of the medicinal and other uses of dog poo in history (page 656), not the least because of the co-author's excellent nose for a good story.

We sincerely thank those who forged boldly into the inner worlds of their imaginations, then into the unknown territory of online submission to enter the competition. As for the rest of you, we like to think that there are other images, ideas, observations and stories hovering out there in cyberspace or languishing in a hitherto undiscovered folder in our new system.

Log on and send them in for next Christmas.

To infinity and beyond!

Ruth Armstrong

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