

Occasional assistance needed for general practice

Thirty years ago, when general practice surgeries were attached to doctors' houses, there was generally someone around to help in emergencies, even at awkward times.

One Saturday morning, when I was working alone, a boy aged about 7 was brought in to the surgery by his mother. He needed a penicillin injection, and when I asked his mother if she could hold him, she said "The last time he had a needle it took three people to hold him, so I'll wait outside".

I went upstairs to the house and enlisted the help of my veterinarian son, who was home for the weekend.

"I'll show you how to hold him", I said. "We learnt how to hold all animals," he replied. So I left him to it.

In keeping with the fashion favoured by vets at the time, my son had long ginger brown hair, a beard and a bushy moustache. He pinned the child to the examination couch with two ginger-haired hands and grinned at him through his beard. Hypnotised by this spectacle, the boy didn't move, breathe or make a sound.

When it was all over, I took him back out to his mother, who had not seen my son enter the consulting room from upstairs. The boy said to her "Was that a bear?". I didn't disillusion them.

Doubtless, they still tell the story about the odd assistants employed by the funny woman doctor in Brisbane.

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