

## ACUMEN: The Acute Medicine Network

**Sir,**

Acumen is an electronic learning package, which has been developed by the Royal Colleges of Physicians with E-learning for Health (E-LfH) and the Department of Health for trainees in acute medicine. Aimed at doctors of ST1 grade and above, it is a considerable resource using interactive case-based scenarios.

The 64 commonest presentations to medicine, as defined by the curriculum of acute medicine, are presented as cases that trainees can work through, with expert guidance. Key skills are tested such as history taking, examination (incorporating multimedia attachments), selection of investigations and interpretation of results, before moving on to diagnosis and management.

Scenarios are written by specialists, in collaboration with acute medicine physicians to ensure appropriate content. There are also single objective sessions – short learning points about the key topics – and full knowledge sessions, which are more comprehensive overviews of

conditions. Linked to national guidelines with recommendations for further reading Acumen also encourages users to broaden their horizons and search for the evidence that underpins the health care we practice.

Trainees should find this method of learning refreshing and stimulating as well as useful in both clinical settings and as preparation for examinations. The on-line setting means that education is accessible at any time of the day or night, helping to continue the commitment to training emphasized by the recent Consensus Conference on Acute Medicine, which can be challenging to deliver in the modern health-care setting of shifts and restricted hours.

More information can be found on-line ([www.acumen-online.org.uk](http://www.acumen-online.org.uk)).

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element. The numerous work-based assessments during the foundation programme, including direct observation of procedural skills assessments to evaluate clinical skills, may encourage the development of an obsessive personality. However, we believe that this is a healthy trait, which is motivated by a commitment to quality.

We wish to suggest a name for this obsessive interest in looking at veins: vasospectomania. 'Vasospectophilia' and 'cannulatophilia' are alternatives.

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## Vasospectomania: an obsessive trait prevalent among junior doctors

**Sir,**

Studies have found differences between the prevalent personality types of doctors and the general public (Reeve, 1980; Magee and Hojat, 1998; Hojat et al, 1999; Clack et al, 2004), other professions (Akiskal et al, 2005), and within medicine itself (Bruce et al, 1983; Schwartz et al, 1994; Kluger et al, 1999; Eng et al, 2004). Doctors have a higher prevalence of dysthymia and obsessional characteristics (Gabbard, 1985; Akiskal et al, 2005), and up to two thirds of junior doctors show features of obsessive-compulsive disorder (Sweet, 2003).

This obsessive nature in physicians may manifest as feelings of guilt, self-doubt and an exaggerated sense of responsibility. This can result in difficulty relaxing, reluctance to take time off, problems allocating time to family, chronic feelings of 'not doing enough', and the confusion of selfishness with healthy self interest (Gabbard, 1985).

Responding to the article by Gabbard (1985) one commentator regarded an obsessive trait as an asset, writing 'you can bet your bottom dollar that when I need my common duct explored I am going to hunt up the most exquisitely compulsive surgeon I can possibly find' (Worden, 1986).

The history of medicine is replete with notable medical eccentrics, all of whom share an obsessive trait. However, it is not just these few who demonstrate obsessive idiosyncratic behaviour. Richard Asher (1995), the eminent physician and an eccentric, described the widespread fascination with medical rarities (spanophilia), particularly among medical students.

Obsessive traits are also shared by junior doctors, and by extension senior medical students. Many junior doctors exhibit a mild obsessive nature in their approach to cannulation. Most of us have found ourselves evaluating strangers' veins, speculating on which gauge of cannula we would be able to insert. This is not entirely surprising as junior doctors' job satisfaction is affected by their self-perceived clinical ability (Finset et al, 2005) of which cannulation is a core