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## DOING THE ROUNDS



### MEDICINE BALLS

#### How to Save the NHS

**AT THE** risk of being positive, M.D. has discovered what can happen in the NHS if the staff are allowed to think for themselves and money is spent on patients rather than quangos, consultancies and plcs...

#### Foot balls

**Janette Hynes, an occupational therapist at East London and City Mental Health Trust, uses football to help patients with severe mental illness whilst in hospital, but they had no team to play with when they got out.**

Despite resistance from the prevailing attitudes in mainstream football, she set up the Positive Mental Attitude League (PMAL) in 2002. The league now has 14 teams, with 20 waiting to join, and has demonstrated better physical and mental health for its players. Many have lost weight, stopped smoking and got jobs. The league is linked to social services and absence from training allows a player who is relapsing to be picked up much sooner.

#### Histology therapy

**Sue Morgan, clinical nurse specialist at St James' Hospital, Leeds, looks after children and teenagers with cancer. One of them asked her: "What colour is my cancer?" so she set up a service where young patients can view their cancer under a microscope. It's had huge psychological benefits.**

Many children (and adults) imagine their cancer as a ravenous beast, all hooded, black and menacing, eating away at them. In reality, their

cancers looked like "sausages", "Granny's wallpaper" and "Jelly Beans". Far from trivialising their illness, it's given the children confidence to fight it. A side effect has been that pathologists have started talking to patients again.

#### ME for kids

**Esther Crawley is a consultant paediatrician in Bath specialising in children with chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS). One in 100 get it badly enough to stop them accessing school (it's the commonest cause of long-term school absence, ahead of leukaemia). And contrary to popular prejudice, it's more common among the poor (they just suffer in silence).**

CFS is part genetic, part environmental (it can be triggered by a virus or head injury) and children typically have memory and concentration problems, feel knackered after exertion and have unrefreshing sleep. They can also get pain just about anywhere (head, stomach, joints). Despite a wealth of evidence demonstrating its existence, only one in 10 children receives treatment.

Dr Crawley has developed a regional service covering 500,000 children. She trains other doctors, goes into schools and social services, supports parents, works with charities and spreads the message through the media. But the key to her success is allowing the children to work out and manage their own rehabilitation programmes.

Children hate being ill, they want to get better and they do. As Crawley puts it: "In 80 percent of the cases, the child makes the diagnosis before the GP. I advise them to ask for tests and referral." So children with CFS, one of the most ignored and vilified illnesses of recent years, make their diagnoses, get referred, help design their rehabilitation programmes and achieve full recovery 90 percent of the time. The message is clear. Use the creativity of professionals to free patients to sort themselves out. And it might save the NHS.

M.D.