

## Comments on the first 'Person in Practice' article

The inaugural article written by Dr Abi Berger in the new 'Person in Practice' series was published in the July 2016 issue of the journal.<sup>1</sup> In it, Dr Berger discusses attracting patients with similar conditions to her own. She 'admits' to suffering from anxiety and epiretinal membranes in the past and, more recently, to symptoms of menopause including disturbed sleep, night sweats and low mood, which she describes as an abyss. She goes on to report on her visit to her own general practitioner (GP) who was not familiar with "estrogen as an adjunct to the intrauterine system" and how together they formulated a management plan. Her experience with hormone replacement therapy medication and how it has helped her with management of certain patients is recorded.

What a breath of fresh air! The article is brave, honest and considered, and just what practitioners and patients want to know about, in my experience. How refreshing that Dr Berger's GP admitted to little knowledge in this area and worked with his patient to the benefit of them both.

Writing as a consultant gynaecologist (now retired) and breast cancer patient, who became menopausal overnight following my third chemotherapy treatment, it is now very apparent to me that doctors are human beings as well as physicians.

I agree that "personal experience can contribute to the therapeutic exchange" when "reflected on with transparency". This is especially the case when, as in this article, *n=one* wise, experienced medical practitioner and woman.

Hooray to the journal's Editor-in-Chief, Dr Sandy Goldbeck-Wood, who acknowledges that "the line between clinician and patient is sometimes more blurred than medical culture has allowed us to recognise" and reminds us that "the clinician can be part of the treatment" and not just a technician.<sup>2</sup> How wonderful that she whispers that doctors have feelings (I would go further and call them emotions) that we have been trained to set aside in medical school and that it is more useful to reflect on these rather than deny them.

Has Dr Berger disturbed me? No. I am both intrigued and looking forward to reading more 'Person in Practice' articles, together with any debate they may stimulate.

**Mary Hernon**, MRCOG, DFRH

Former Consultant Gynaecologist, Alder Hey Children's Hospital and Liverpool Women's Hospital, Liverpool, UK; mhernon@doctors.org.uk

**Competing interests** None declared.



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*J Fam Plann Reprod Health Care* 2017;**43**:78–79.  
doi:10.1136/jfprhc-2016-101619

## REFERENCES

- 1 Berger A. Personal reflections on the menopause journey. *J Fam Plann Reprod Health Care* 2016;42:225.
- 2 Goldbeck-Wood S. To love, wisdom, and the personal in practice. *J Fam Plann Reprod Health Care* 2016;42:167.