

How do you read? Not the skill you learned at junior school, but rather: how do you keep up with what we impressively call *The Literature*? I've met, over the years, just a few people who read systematically. By this, I mean people who sit down and read every page of every journal that they get in the post. Most of the rest of us, I suspect, have 'the pile of guilt' which is the stack of unread journals, mostly still in their cellophane wrapper, and which mock us in our homes or offices. I'd guess that the majority of people reading this are looking at it fresh from 'the pile of guilt'. As a medical student I used clip interesting articles. As a junior doctor I used to kid myself that I might read an article in full on the second perusal of the journal. I'm much more honest with myself now; the pile of guilt is mostly going to go in recycling, and, if I didn't read it properly the first time, I'm never going to read it a second time. The electronic table of contents – is another addition to 'the pile of guilt', except that it sits in an email inbox until deletion, and doesn't involve so much paper.

A technique I've found very helpful in keeping up my reading is to get other people to recommend things to me. This happens on an informal level, for example, a colleague asking if I've read a certain paper. More recently, however, the internet has become much more sophisticated at helping make these recommendations. Of course, you can use Twitter to alert you to what people are reading,

but perhaps more focused are services – usually free of charge – which tell you when things you're interested in arise. My favourite at the moment is something called *EvidenceUpdates*, <http://plus.mcmaster.ca/EvidenceUpdates/>, which trawls journals for papers of interest, and then gets sentinel readers to score their importance and newsworthiness. When you register to receive alerts, you specify the areas you're interested in, and you set the level at which you'd like to be alerted – my level is set at 6 (out of a possible 7) for each. This means that I get an email two or three times a week linking me to the abstract of a paper which is quite likely to be of interest. In short, I get told about this week's 'must read' papers.

This brings me to the first of two new items this month. The first is the launch of a new section, *Picket*, which is described in an editorial in the main journal, and which should look familiar to those of you who have read the journal *Evidence Based Medicine*. Three section editors, and a group of associate editors, have taken on the task of abstracting articles of general interest from a variety of sources. *EvidenceUpdates* is one of the main sources of these papers. This abstracting is a stylised, formal process; we then try to place these articles into a real-clinician context with a short commissioned commentary. I hope that you'll find the articles useful, and in many instances will want to go back and read the original papers they're based on.

The other new item is a different look to a successful part of the journal. Helen Williams has been writing the *Illuminations* section for some time – and I still use her article about distinguishing the thymus from more sinister findings in the chest as my definitive guide to the subject. However, in response to requests from the readership, she is now going to be providing her *Illuminations* as extended matching questions, a style familiar to anyone who has done an exam – or examined – in the last decade or two. Peter Lio's *Dermatophile* will be taking a similar format; some questions which you are supposed – no peeking – to answer before turning to the correct answer later in the journal. We hope to be able, in the near future, to put the questions up onto our website, to compile a useful resource for folk both pre and post examinations.

There are lots of other fascinating papers this month; I look forward to receiving feedback at ian.wacogne@bch.nhs.uk

If you enjoyed the extra reading in the last edition, here's something very different, which illustrates how you sometimes stumble across interesting things. A paediatrician in Mexico, Giordano Perez-Gaxiola, drew my attention to an article somewhere I'd never have looked, which takes a look at why people often don't do what we'd like. You can find it online in a journal called *Miller-McCune*, at <http://bit.ly/BeliefMed>. It's another cup of tea paper. Enjoy the reading!