LIFELINE

Yvonne H Carter

Yvonne Carter trained at St Mary’s Hospital Medical School in London, UK, and graduated in 1983. In 1996, she became the Professor of General Practice and Primary Care at Queen Mary and Westfield College, London: the youngest Chair of General Practice in the UK. She is a general-practitioner principal in Tower Hamlets and the RCGP Chairman of Research.

Which research paper has had most effect on you work? The Black Report, which I first read while researching my thesis on child accident prevention; sadly this work on inequality published in 1980 is still relevant today.

Do you believe in capital punishment? Only for members of my academic department who forget to tell me about their presentations, grants, or publications.

What is your favourite country? Australia, the view from Sydney Harbour is hard to beat.

What is your favourite book, and why? The Godfather (also a brilliant film). Full of brilliant one-liners like “Keep your friends close to you; keep your enemies closer still” and “Never let anyone know what you are thinking”—sentiments relevant to any head of an academic department!

What is your greatest fear? Any scary theme park ride and there are many that my 10-year-old son wants to try.

What are you currently reading? The Surgeon of Crowthorne by Simon Winchester, a sad but true story which shows that murdering doctors are not restricted to the 20th century.

What is your worst habit? Many including: not being able to say no easily. A colleague once told me that women were better at multitasking and it is getting pretty exhausting.

What complementary/alternative therapies have you tried? I recommend a traditional Malaysian massage (preferably on the beach) after a long flight to the Far East. Fantastic for relieving a stiff neck.

I posted a URL leading to a photograph of the Blanchard bone and so-called “transcription”, and gave my considered opinion: “Do they look like the phases of the moon to you? Have you even seen a picture of what you are talking about ever? Perhaps if you had seen a picture of it you might have learnt to assess the quality of evidence with your own eyes instead of taking someone else’s word for it sight unseen.” I followed with a sharp thrust to his conscience: “You can be as patronising as you like, it doesn’t make your case any stronger.”

He’d ended his argument with a motto: “Everybody is born ignorant. Some people learn to be stupid.” I responded with: “And others are too stupid to learn.”

Before going to bed I turned my attention for light relief to a newsgroup devoted to knives and daggers. A gentleman, no doubt used to toting his serrated Spyderco about the house, was asking for help with armadillos under his house: “I have two armadillos that have burrowed under my home, they only come out early in the AM to feed; I’ve tried flooding, poisoning, smoking, bait and trapping, shooting, and stabbing them and still the lil buggers live UNDER my home!!!!”

A compatriot in the love of sharp blades suggested a chlorine bomb made with phosphoric acid and bleach. A man in Japan advocated blocking the burrow with two sacks of mothballs, adding that he’d had some success with squirrels in his loft. There ensued discussion on the news that a much loved regular to the group, Fred, who’d “had squirrels in his loft for years”, had finally been “put in the nuthouse”.

S J Marshall