



## Nowt as queer as bigoted doctors

Reading Lisa Pritchard's report of discrimination in the NHS triggered memories of some personal experiences ('Thou shall not progress', July 3, 2004, page 12).

During some work experience I had arranged before applying to medical school, I witnessed two outrageous and upsetting incidents of homophobia.

On the first day of my placement, I was shadowing a consultant who was talking to a patient about a possible vasectomy. The patient was a male hairdresser. Immediately after the patient left the consultation room, the surgeon began to make scathing comments about him, speculating that, because of his occupation, he might be gay. I asked myself why an allegedly gay man might want or need a vasectomy. But perhaps the most shocking aspect of the incident was that the nurses present didn't seem to think anything of his malicious comments.

It was almost as if, through repeated exposure,

they had become numbed to such behaviour.

I presumed it was just a one-off incident and carried on with the rest of the placement. How wrong I was, for just a couple of days later I overheard similar comments. This time it was in a different department with different staff.

One of the juniors on the ward was discussing a patient's sexual orientation with another doctor and making quite blunt (and unrepeatable) statements about it.

Aren't we supposed to be living in the 21st century? I just hope for the sake of the NHS and the public that the GMC's *Tomorrow's Doctors* guidelines will help produce more balanced and non-judgemental clinicians.

In my opinion, educating medical students about homosexuality (and, indeed, other minority groups) is the way forward towards increased, if not full, acceptance.

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