MILLER’S TALE

Reading between the lines

We are all faced with an increasing volume of “bumf” to read. Guidelines, working party recommendations, directives, and memoranda arrive by Royal Mail, the internal post, facsimile, and electronic mail on an all too frequent basis. I am the first to admit that I do not read most of it all that carefully.

The memorandum—on Trust headed paper—arrived in the internal post on a Monday, along with loads of other material from the Trust’s communications office.

“Re European Commission Directive No: 01/April/02-AF”

. . . I was already losing interest in the content.

“In order for the Trust to comply with this directive, will all senior clinicians note its contents and cascade the information to their teams?”

. . . My interest now minimal, I was just deciding to place the document in my auxiliary file—you know the circular one that sits on the floor—but I read on.

“The term ‘normal’ saline is no longer to be used to describe 0.9% saline solution. The correct term for this is physiological isotonic saline solution. When prescribing this on a patient’s drug chart it should be noted that the appropriate abbreviation for this fluid is PISS.”

I looked again at the directive’s details. The date, 1 April, and the initials A(pril)F(ool) were now so obvious! I really must read more carefully in future.

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