



One-stop screening

Sir, Your report "One-stop shops offer cancer scan" (Feb 5) rings alarm bells. The goal of an earlier diagnosis is entirely understandable but the method is worrying. The absolute benefit of this screening tool at population level in terms of numbers of lives saved, or quantifying the balance of benefits against the potential harms, is not stated.

In UK hospitals, requesting imaging that produces radiation, such as a CT scan, is restricted to the clinicians who have the duty of care to an individual patient. Changing this to a direct-to-consumer investigation can have serious consequences. I still remember when the delivery of radiation, both as screening and as a treatment, resulted in serious harm. In the late 1950s researchers sifted through data and found that children born to mothers who had been x-rayed during pregnancy had twice as many cancer deaths before the age of ten.

Eventually this practice had to be changed as a result of the harmful effects, but not before a long struggle with the x-ray industry to comply and reduce the harmful effects of radiation.

This policy seems to have been motivated by political rather than scientific concerns.

Guida Kurzer

Clinical nurse specialist, Barts Health NHS Trust

Oxford dean battle

Sir, The four-year civil war at Christ Church is over ("Peace at last in Christ Church battle", Feb 5). But many questions remain, starting with: which trustees on its governing body are now going to resign? Some must go because the charitable funds of the college have lost an estimated £20 million during this dispute. More than £6 million is thought to have been wasted on the legal and PR costs of the repetitive attempts to oust the dean. About £12 million will have been lost out on as a result of cancelled donations and legacies. An estimated £2 million will be the cost of reimbursing the dean's legal fees, his compensation settlement and the expenses of the mediation. Some of this astronomical expenditure has been the subject of complaints to the regulators that it was not properly authorised in accordance with the Charity Commission's requirements. Has any educational charity ever blown £20 million so stupidly and so shamefully?

The Rev Jonathan Aitken

Christ Church alumnus (1961-64); London SW5

Corrections and clarifications



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Church's proposal to model itself on politics

Sir, It is disappointing, but perhaps not surprising, that proposals for "significant change" by the Church of England ("Behold the Bishop of Brexit", and "Faith Matters", Feb 7) do not include its disestablishment. Small parishes around the country are the backbone of the church, each run by a handful of people with a limited amount of time and energy. Dealing with the Visitations, Faculties, Articles of Enquiry and many other relentless bureaucratic requirements of the church hierarchy, laid down by the law of the land because this is the state church, is time spent not doing the things that we should be doing: caring for those in need, running the pattern of services, raising more funds for the upkeep of a listed building. Unless dramatic action is taken to modernise the governance of the church, those parishes will die. Releasing the church from the stranglehold of establishment, as well as empowering parishes by giving them independence, would be a step in the right direction.

Christopher Purvis
Patron and churchwarden, St Michael & All Angels, Clifton Hampden, Oxon

Sir, The CofE consultation document on diocesan structure and bishops'

responsibilities diverts attention from the changes that are needed. The UK is one of the few countries in the developed world that has retained an established church. This entitles the CofE to incorporate its measures in law, which can be intimidating to parish volunteers: there is now a reluctance to take on the key role of churchwarden largely for this reason. As the churches in most rural villages are part of the CofE estate, there is more at stake than just religion. A disestablished CofE could be reformed as a national charity run by a CEO and board of mainly elected governors.

Ian Graham

Treasurer, St Michael's Church, Bowness on Solway, Cumbria

Sir, You are to be congratulated on your balanced but forthright editorial on the church's plans. In particular, your conclusion about the nation's pastoral and spiritual welfare being of supreme importance cannot be stated often enough, given the church's ingrained propensity to give greater attention to secular issues. Senior prelates are entitled to their views on matters of public debate but they are no greater an authority on such matters than anyone else. In any case,

we have government and opposition figures to comment on them and, unlike church dignitaries, most of them are elected. What could make a difference is if senior church figures spoke out on the collapse of personal and family morality that has often resulted in the appalling mistreatment and killing of children.

John Webster
London SW1

Sir, At last the CofE seems to have grasped the need to reduce the number of dioceses. If the Roman Catholic Church can cope more than adequately with a Bishop for East Anglia, the Anglican church ought to be able to do likewise. Economies of scale are long overdue, and episcopal ministry need not suffer given greater use of technology, which has been a great benefit to church members during the pandemic.

Neil McKittrick
Peterborough

Sir, This seems an unfortunate time to suggest modelling the church on political lines, given that the political guy rope has never been weaker.

Irena Milloy
Histon, Cambridge

Holocaust 'humour'

Sir, Much as I deplore aspects of Jimmy Carr's sense of humour ("Comedy is dying, says Carr about Holocaust joke furore", Feb 7), I would be even more upset if he and other comedians had their scripts vetted by a PC committee. Freedom of speech is more important than the privilege not to be upset. In addition, there are practical questions: who would be on such a committee? What criteria would be used? Any enforcement of the "acceptable type of comedy" would either result in utterly bland jokes or lead to the very totalitarian mentality that humour needs to puncture.

As the son of a Holocaust survivor, I thought the joke was tasteless, but the right to make it is sacrosanct. The best response is for audiences to boo when they hear malicious material.

Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain

Maidenhead Synagogue

Redeeming Boris

Sir, I disagree with Clare Foges ("Johnson has become what he always loathed", Feb 7): Boris Johnson can

not be rehabilitated. Comparisons of Johnson to Trump long predate the scandal over the Downing Street parties: when Johnson declared for Vote Leave the cosmopolitan liberal London establishment threw a switch that changed his image from "figure of fun" to "dishonest schemer". Nothing he can do will ever again ingratiate himself with this set. Johnson will not be permitted to "withdraw gracefully" under any circumstances: any resignation will be gleefully depicted as his humiliation by those who have been anticipating the day that they can finally kick him when he's down.

Robert Frazer
Salford

Mental health drive

Sir, We welcome increased awareness of mental health and that there are steps we can all take to protect it. In this we should be thankful to Prince Harry and others in the public eye for speaking so openly about their mental health. But Martha Gill is also right that in raising awareness not all boats have risen at the same level ("Harry's mental health drive is too focused on wellbeing", Thunderer, Feb 7). Those

severely affected by mental illness, the most unwell, still experience significant stigma and discrimination.

Carers of people living with a diagnosis of schizophrenia came together 50 years ago, further to an article in *The Times*, to form the charity that would become Rethink Mental Illness. On July 25 this year, our birthday, we will be marking National Schizophrenia Awareness Day. We urge everyone to lend their voice to our efforts to change the way we think and act about mental illness.

Brian Dow
Deputy CEO, Rethink Mental Illness

Frying the mind

Sir, James Marriott ("How Stephen Fry fried my mind", Times2, Feb 4) points out that Stephen Fry's voice is regularly drowned out by the sound effects on his podcast "Inside Your Mind". The effect of this ghastly racket on insomniacs such as me, who rely on Stephen Fry's mellifluous tones to get them off to sleep, has been to fuel their nightmares in a most dastardly fashion.

Margaret Midgley
Winchester

PRINCESS MARY'S TROUSSEAU

FROM THE TIMES FEBRUARY 8, 1922

The Royal trousseau was on view yesterday and though, like the trousseaux of modern and less exalted brides, it is not very large, it is quite charming and simple. Beautiful colours, of which blue in many soft tones and sweet-pea mauves and pinks predominate, were shown made up in all the new supple fabrics for day and evening wear. They represent Princess Mary's known preferences in colour, but there were also two quite lovely all-black gowns, which prove that the Princess has accepted the modern feeling for this excellent foil

to fairness. Most of the frocks are 7in or 8in off the ground, and they reflect the new notes in early spring fashions — the low waist, the girdle, the Grecian straight shoulder-to-shoulder neck and the round neck, the bell sleeve, the short sleeve, and the three-quarter, adapted to the various times of wearing, and many other fancies that will be seen in flood tide when spring is really here. How much the Princess enjoyed choosing her things and her unwearied kindness in giving fittings to harassed dressmakers was the constant tale at the many houses visited yesterday.

Princess Mary has chosen, as most fair girls would like to choose, blue fox trimming to her evening coat, fluffy and becoming; ermine in its silkiest form, with the tails used as fringe; and mole, the supplest of all furs and the most charming setting to a gown of soft blue. The entire trousseau, with the exception of the

bridal gown and bridesmaids' dresses, has already been delivered at the Palace.

Silver tarnishes easily, and the weather has all been against the hurrying up of the bridal gown and bridesmaids' dresses, which will be in a scheme of silver, white satin, pearl embroidery, and lace. They are being made by Messrs Reville and Rossiter. Princess Mary will wear a Princess gown of cloth of silver, with an overdress of silver lace embroidered in pearl and silver. Her train will be made of specially woven shot-silver duchesse satin with embroideries of Indian silver and silk. For wear over the wedding dress in driving to the Abbey is a Russian ermine stole wrap. There is a fringe of the ermine tails round the neck and it is lined with white brocaded velvet and covered with white chiffon.

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Bard for tots

Sir, Further to your report "Shakespeare's timeless lessons for tots" (Feb 7), in the 1990s Lois Burdett, a primary school teacher in Ontario, experimented with teaching her grade two and three students (six and seven-year-olds) Shakespeare. The children memorised speeches from the comedies and tragedies, acted out scenes, and designed their own costumes. The results were astounding. Before and after samples of their writing showed complex sentence structures, poetic phrasing, and sophisticated vocabulary and ideas way beyond their age level. Burdett went on to publish a series of books, *Shakespeare Can Be Fun*, illustrated by the students. Educators would be well advised to research her work: an inexpensive method that achieves remarkable results in literacy.

Susan Hughes

Chichester

Queen Camilla

Sir, Royal titles should emulate changes in our laws, such as equality of the sexes ("Prince celebrates honour for his 'darling wife'", news, and "Queen Camilla", leading article, Feb 7). Perhaps the Queen could add to her wish for Camilla to be Queen Consort that any future Queen should entitle her husband King Consort, in memory of our highly worthy Prince Philip.

Ann Stevenson
Stafford

Tinnitus treatment

Sir, Further to your report "Sufferers suicidal over tinnitus pain" (Feb 7) I suffered from tinnitus until I had hearing aids prescribed, since when the condition disappeared. Audiology staff told me that this was a known effect. I think it should be made more widely known and offered as an inexpensive first-line treatment.

David Wakefield
Worcester

Cottage industry

Sir, When I was a medical student at King's College Hospital in the 1960s a brick-built cabin near the main entrance housed a bar famous for its evening and lunchtime gatherings where medics from all levels of the professional hierarchy could meet. It was fondly known as King's Cottage Hospital (letters, Feb 5 & 7), perhaps to reflect the medical wisdom that was so frequently dispensed therein.

Dr Andrew Sutton
Midhurst, W Sussex

Budding plagiarist

Sir, In the 1980s, when we were looking for a secondary school for our children, we went to an open evening at a comprehensive school. The head of English was proudly displaying a poem written by a particularly promising pupil (letter, Feb 7). It was Rupert Brooke's *The Great Lover*.

Philip Roe
St Albans

Rare oysters

Sir, Denise Kennedy (Feb 7) says that nanny goat's kidneys was "a family euphemism" for lamb's testicles. Nanny goat's kidneys? In New Zealand we called them "mountain oysters".

Roger Daldy
London W5