

Led by the nose

In which our intrepid correspondent notes his nasal negative.

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A week or so ago, I had a cold. As you know, this condition in the human male is far worse than that in the female. The latter may have a mild headache and a few sniffles but nothing approaching the devastating illness that befalls her mate. Therefore, he should be shown understanding as well as lavish attention and tender cossetting.

Ah well, one out of three isn't so bad, I suppose.

It's my opinion that in the nose department the Almighty has bestowed upon me an upside/downside situation—good nose, bad nose, if you will.

Cosmetically, I am not too badly off, if I do say so myself. Externally, I don't feel that I need the various forms of plastic surgical procedures in vogue these days. Internally, in the past I did have a somewhat inadequate operation for a deviated septum. But then, I am rather a devious sort of chap anyway, so any corrective attempt is liable to be doomed from the outset.

No, it is in the realm of nasal *function* that I am afflicted with a bipolar disorder.

First, I have a supremely keen sense of smell capable, I would hazard, of detecting the bouquet of a fine malt whisky at a distance of 100 metres. Whether an aroma is pungent, piquant, or putrid, I can define its cause and source in a flash.

The smell of fresh coffee, the hint of a subtle perfume, a rose, an onion, fragrance or farmyard, I can detect

them all by their merest hint. In my olfactory bank I have stored a myriad of evocative whiffs, each bringing to mind a vivid and usually pleasant memory.

er intelligence, rather like the acute gagging reflex I have that alarms and exasperates my dentist.

In any event, the onset of spontaneous periods of itching nostrils,

The hospital smell is a multifaceted formula which means different things to different people—to some, dread, alarm, revulsion, grief, while to others, familiarity, camaraderie, excitement, and profound satisfaction.

For example, a certain muddy smell that I experienced recently on a golf course immediately transported me to the Thames and holidays at my grandfather's house on that river. Similarly, the soft smell of raspberries in summer takes me to the back garden of the family home in Inverness, Scotland. These transatlantic journeys take only a nanosecond to complete.

Then there is the hospital smell. This is a multifaceted formula which means different things to different people—to some, dread, alarm, revulsion, grief, while to others, familiarity, camaraderie, excitement, and profound satisfaction. But it is universal, instantly recognizable, and all-pervading when present.

My notable nasal negative is that I have recurrent rhinitis.

My nose runs. Faster than I can.

My claim, as yet unaccepted by the medical profession and lay public alike, is that this is a symptom of high-

sneezing, and snuffling heralds the tortures of the damned.

"My word, do you have a cold?"

"Doe, I just have this runny dose."

"Well, it sounds like a cold to me!" (Moves away, exits left rapidly.)

The symptoms do not have the defined patterns of allergy: distinct and identifiable causative factors and equally effective remedies.

"Stop that damned trumpetin'!" my grandad would order.

Easy to say, bloody impossible to do. Just pass the Kleenex.

So if I offend you or incur your displeasure and you secretly desire redress or quiet revenge, think not of ENT: ear, nose, and throat, but rather of HNG: hear, nose, and gloat!

Dr Fraser is retired from pediatric general surgery at BC Children's Hospital, where he was head of surgery. He enjoys reading, writing, and erratic golf.