

## A lesson learned from working with children

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**M**y career has been one of caring for, operating upon, and looking after young children, the smaller citizens of our society.

Several people, upon hearing this, have said, “Oh dear, how awful. It must have been so sad, so depressing. The poor little ones!”

Not so. I had the most privileged, exciting, and satisfying job in all the surgical specialties. You see, children are truthful, direct, and reliable historians and people, as well as seldom obese! They are trusting and resilient postoperative patients, free from lifestyle-induced and other complications.

To be confronted by the fixed stare of a gimlet-eyed small child who says “UP!” which means “get me the hell outta here, I’m all better now!” is truly wonderful.

Pediatric patients don’t give a damn whom you are, or whom you think you are. When I was training in London we had a professor who strove to cultivate the image of the brilliant but inevitably untidy and shambolic academic. One day the great man entered the ward, acolytes trailing behind, when a small Cockney boy hauled himself upright in his cot and shouted, “Oi! Why don’t yer get yer hair cut!” Total chaos ensued, much enjoyed by yours truly, who had always found the professor a quintessential S.O.B.

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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.



Nowadays, when speaking to my colleagues still in practice, they complain of being adrift in regulations, budgets, targets, paperwork, and (dear God!) mission statements.

We has-beens, residents of Jurassic Park, nod wisely and say, “It’s not like in our day.” But what is the truth of it all?

The patients are still there, as are their afflictions. There have been incredible advances in diagnosis and

treatment technology. People get better because of us and, on occasion, in spite of us. There is much to do, enjoy, and be thankful for. As an erstwhile surgeon and patient, I feel I should know.

But one element does seem to have diminished. It was an aspect of my own particular line of work in which I was able to liberally indulge. I put it to you, whatever your field of interest, go out, work hard—but above all, have fun!