

INDICATIONS

Endoscope Mightier Than the Sword

A team of surgeons at New York–Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia University Medical Center is getting close to making gallbladders disappear. “The wand makes it a lot easier,” Dr. Harry Potter explained. Just kidding. The surgical team actually used natural orifice transluminal endoscopic surgery (NOTES). An endoscope was inserted through a 1-inch incision behind the uterus and into the patient’s body cavity. Using that same scope, the gallbladder was detached and removed through the incision behind the uterus, thus leaving no external scars and no visible evidence that the surgery had ever been performed. “Internal incisions, such as in the uterus, are less painful and may allow for quicker recovery than incisions in the abdominal wall,” Dr. Albus Dumbledore noted. Kidding again. The leader of the team was actually Dr. Voldemort. You’re not buying this, are you? Okay, the lead surgeon’s name was really Dr. Severus Snape. Would you believe Dr. Hermione Granger? Dr. Ron Weasley? All right, all right. If you really *have* to know, the team leader was really a wandless Muggle, Dr. Marc Bessler.

A King Among Nurse’s Aides

Until recently, 56-year-old Charles Wesley Mumbere was a nurse’s aide at the Spring Creek Rehabilitation and Health Care Cen-

ter in Harrisburg, Pa. He tended “the elderly and the sick for a living—bathing them, dressing them, helping them eat,” according to the Harrisburg Patriot-News. Johnna Marx, executive director of the Golden Living Center Blue Ridge Mountain in Susquehanna Township, where he previously worked, told the newspaper that Mr. Mumbere was “very loyal, a very hard worker, a very nice person.” Mr. Mumbere no longer works as a nurse’s aide. After spending 24 years in the United States, he has returned to his previous line of work: king. Mr. Mumbere, it turns out, is the leader of the Bakonjo, an ethnic group of about 300,000 people who live in the kingdom of Rwenzururu, located in the western mountains of Uganda. He originally came to the United States when the Bakonjo and the Ugandan government signed a peace deal that allowed him to take a break from his administrative responsibilities and continue his education. The situation later changed, however, cutting off his government stipend and forcing him to stay here and find employment. But the politics of Uganda have changed again, and he has returned to take his place on the throne. When asked how his friends and coworkers in Harrisburg, who didn’t know about his royal background, would react, Mr. Mumbere told the Patriot-News, “They will get shocked. ... They will be making fun of me.”

Gentamicin: Into the Fire Blight

Carl Sagan once said that a “tree and I are made of the same stuff.” [Note to editor: I checked, and this is the first time that Carl Sagan has ever been mentioned in this column.] That may explain why the Environmental Protection Agency is granting “emergency” permission to the state of Michigan to spray apple orchards with gentamicin to fight a tree disease called fire blight. [Note to writer: First Harry Potter, and now this? Who the hell is Carl Sagan?] The disease has become resistant to streptomycin, the antibiotic that apple growers had been using. [Note to editor: You know ... the astronomer? “Cosmos”? The “billions and billions” guy?] The Infectious Diseases Society of America, which does not support the plan and is urging the

EPA to rescind its decision, pointed out that agency officials had previously stated that use of gentamicin in agriculture could reduce its value in treating humans. [Note to writer: I bet we’re losing billions and billions of readers with this ancient reference. How about something for our younger readers? Got anything about podcasts? Or maybe a blog? How about a Facebook page?] “At a time when bacteria are becoming increasingly resistant to many of our best antibiotics, it is an extremely bad idea to risk undermining gentamicin’s effectiveness for treating human disease by using it to treat a disease in apples,” Dr. Donald Poretz, IDSA president, said in a statement that did not appear in a podcast, blog, or his Facebook page.

—Richard Franki

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