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BOWELLED OVER

Earlier this year, A Fo Ben may have been guilty of failing to recognise the potential for a novel discovery from germ-free animals ('Gut Feeling, *PN* issue 4 2016'). The Thy1- α Syn (alpha-synuclein overexpressing) mouse is predestined to develop a mousey equivalent of Parkinson's disease. However, squeaky-clean 'boy in the bubble' mice did not develop the predicted motor deficits. Remarkably, antibiotic treatment ameliorates the phenotype while microbial recolonisation promotes it. This is a true example of gene versus environment demonstrating that gut microbiota are required for motor deficits, microglia activation and α Syn pathology in these mice. Perhaps John Harvey Kellogg's obsession with colonic irrigation now has a modicum of research evidence.

Cell 2016;167:1469–1480.e12.

PITTER PATTERN OF TINY FEET

Our paediatric colleagues remind us that 'children are not simply little adults'. However, just as a dog and owner may become inexplicably similar over time, does looking after tiny ones rub off on paediatricians? An international cross-sectional study analysed the morphological features of 61 paediatricians, 57 emergency medicine physicians and 46 general medicine doctors. Paediatricians were shorter (168 vs 174 cm, $p < 0.001$), even after



Figure 1 The 2016 Brain Art competition had several notable submissions, including this ghostly triptych of unfolded tractography by Roberto from the Institut Pasteur. Credit: www.neurobureau.org (www.neurobureau.org/galleries/brain-art-competition-2016/)

factoring in sex and ethnicity. They were also lighter and had smaller feet. The authors bravely suggest that with 92% specificity and 16% sensitivity 'being a paediatrician' can be diagnosed in doctors <159 cm tall. How would a neurologist measure up?

Emerg Med J 2016;33:918–919.

SILENCE IS GOLDEN

If you are planning to go under the knife—and particularly if you are going to be awake throughout—the choice of operating room music may have crossed your mind. Given the option, A Fo Ben suggests John Cage's 4'33" played back to back. The track is famously four and a half minutes of recorded silence. In contrast, a recent report of surgeons listening to music while operating concluded that music interferes with team communication, contributing to cases over-running. It was most often senior surgeons who chose if and what

music is played—drum and bass music was often played loudest, with the volume raised for popular songs.

JAN 2015; 71:2763–2774.

SOMETHING FISHY

There are abundant examples of animal models of disease that teach us more about the complexity of man. What therefore to make of this improbable research? Although it has been said that when men become sex obsessed their cognitive horsepower slows to a splutter, a recent paper suggests that females selecting mates on the basis of sex organ length have *larger* brains. Just for the record—the fish inexplicably thought bigger was better. It is worth noting that, although true for eastern mosquitofish (*Gambusia holbrooki*), the human replication study is not yet underway.

Proc Biol Sci 2016;283(1843).