

BRIEF COMMUNICATION

The nature of celebrity: A poisoned chalice for today's children?

Since attaining my Fellowship with the Royal Australasian College of Physicians in 2010, I have been working as a Specialist General Paediatrician at Gosford Hospital, as well as a Staff Specialist in Adolescent Medicine at The Children's Hospital at Westmead.

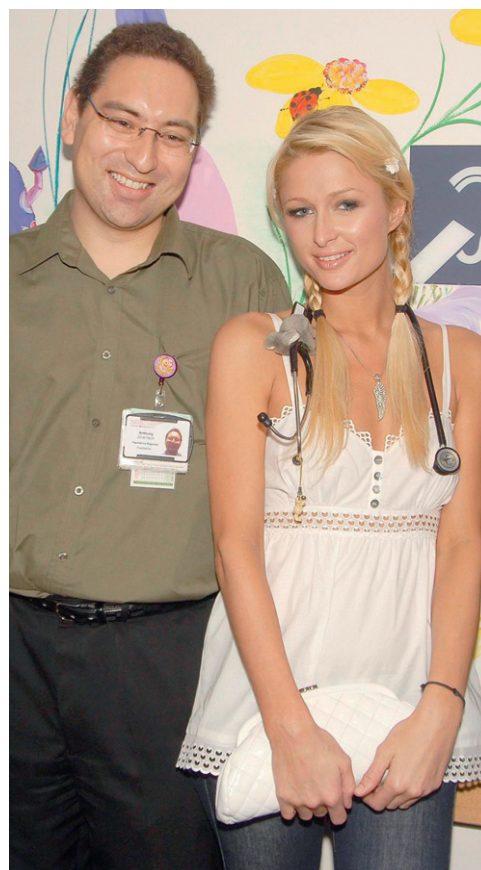
There, I run the Teenlink Service for 8- to 16-year-olds who are from families affected by substance abuse. I also have interests in behavioural disorders and psychopharmacology, and have recently published a chapter in a textbook on the subject.

I continue to pursue my research into breath-holding attacks in toddlers and have been busy establishing a paediatric practice on the Central Coast.

The nature of 'celebrity' in our society is a poisoned chalice. Like progress in Medicine, it may be a force for benevolent altruism or great harm. When asked what they want to be when they grow up, today's children will often reply with 'famous', whereas their predecessors might have supplied a vocation such as a 'fire-fighter', 'teacher' or 'nurse'. The advent of the Internet promises (unattainable?) dreams of fame and stardom. Networking web sites create a social paradox of increased 'connect-ness' to others in the setting of an isolated user.

Increasingly, I am seeing young people with symptoms of 'internet addiction' in my clinic. Is our current generation of youth missing out on developing effective interpersonal skills?

My own brush with a public luminary came at the end of 2006, when I was working as a Paediatric Registrar at Royal North Shore Hospital (see photo). A visit from Paris Hilton was bestowed upon the Children's Ward inpatients and staff at short notice. Outside, a media circus had gathered. To her credit, Ms Hilton was gracious and considerate to the children she met, even though most did not know who she was. I am sure that many a signed photo and plaster cast was sold on eBay that day and made children happy that they could buy what they really wanted! I still have (and use) my stethoscope which she wore for the photo. It did not end up on eBay. I hold onto it because it is a reliable tool rather than for any sentimental reason. I do recall asking Ms Hilton what she had wanted to do when she was a little girl. She looked pensive and thoughtful. I said, 'If you ever wanted to be a medical receptionist, I will need one for my practice!' A genuine and heartfelt smile broke out. I thought I'd go in for the deal clincher. 'I pay above the award wage', I offered.



The grin deepened. She said, 'I'll think about it'. To this day, she has not yet said no!

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Image of the Month: Answer

Mediterranean spotted fever is a disease caused by the agent *Rickettsia conorii*, which is transmitted to humans by the dog tick *Rhipicephalus sanguineus*. The diagnosis is based on a clinical suspicion: the presence of high fever, maculopapular rash and scar in the site of the inoculation ('tache noire') are highly suggestive. This condition is most likely in the paediatric and adolescent population. In Spain, most cases are observed in the east during summertime. This disease had been limited to the Mediterranean area in the past;