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## EDITOR'S CHOICE

# BMJ

All doctors have patients they dislike, and perhaps the new adjective "heartsink" (p 498) will enable them to discuss the problems more openly. Characteristically these patients consult frequently, make excessive demands, and reduce the doctor to a sense of humiliating failure, despair, or frustration. Yet, as O'Dowd (p 528) shows, their proportion in a practice may be tiny—28 (22 women) in a list of 8000 patients—and an active plan may reduce the problem. Gerrard and Riddell (p 530) show that such patients have one or more of 10 characteristics, particularly family or

personal secrets, and examining those will often help them and certainly comfort the doctor. And idées fixe (or bees in the bonnet, call them what you will) were well to the fore in the breast versus bottle controversy of the 1970s: as Hytten shows in his book review (p 564), the lynch mob is still an unpleasant fact of public life. Some might feel that some of the current views on homosexuality are too extreme for the comfort of a traditionally disinterested profession, and Gilbert (p 554) does well to remind the profession of the historical perspective.