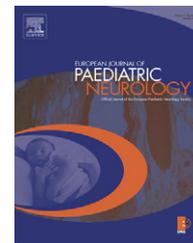




Official Journal of the European Paediatric Neurology Society



Original clinical historical contribution

Stuart Green's vignettes

Dr. Stuart Green was a well-known and inimitable story-teller on many subjects, among them encounters during his neuropaediatric consultations with unusual children and their parents or with extraordinary diseases. Rather, he made them so. He had written down some of them (he called them vignettes) and after his retirement was considering publication, stimulated by the enthusiasm of a few privileged friend—readers. However, these stories did not enter into a conventional scientific or literary genre and he died before having made any precise step in their favour. We thought that these wonderful pieces should be available to his fellow child neurologists or more widely and, encouraged also by his family, contacted the Editors of the EJPN.

Paediatric neurologists of Stuart Green's pioneer generation experienced during their own career two successive professional lives. The first one was with very limited laboratory tools. The second one saw a host of what are now considered conventional diagnostic techniques by our younger colleagues (with perhaps a corresponding unavoidable and proportional decrease in their clinical skills!). Stuart Green's historical position and his natural propensity and talent to see life and people beyond conventional lines are manifest in his short stories of selected neuropaediatric consultations with children and their parents and make them exceptional if not unique. He recorded various unusual situations in which either the children, their parents, the problem they came with or a combination of these (and many other unpredictable events) was a memorable event which had miraculously occurred in front of his eyes. In addition to the humour and style, these stories are a major clinical lesson, going much beyond the case in question that he wanted others to share—of course without telling the message overtly or theorizing.

Nowadays, when uniformity of approaches, sub-specialization, efficiency, technicality, and time constraints are keywords which dominate our thinking of most problems, the old personal, wide clinical approach exemplified in Stuart Green's stories is a salutary reminder. We spend most of our life in clinical consultations seeing often difficult or tragic conditions, but in the middle of that, there is almost always an unexpected, exciting and sometime very funny element, a shared human experience which provides the gist and blessing of our profession. This, however, never comes out

in published case reports and rarely during the usually boring clinical presentations in hospitals.

The EJPN will publish regularly in each issue of the Journal one or more of Stuart Green's vignettes starting with these ones, and short comments will be made if appropriate. They were numbered by him 1–23 without any dates and covered many years including some during his training in the USA but most of them happened later in Birmingham, UK. There is not a privileged theme and often elusive or provocative titles. We have freely chosen the order in which they will appear. One of us (J.S.) tentatively classified them into: Aspects of family history (7 stories), clinical observations (6 vignettes), distressed or difficult parents (6 vignettes), against himself (2 vignettes).

The Editors hope that starting with Stuart Green's stories, other senior paediatric neurologists will follow on what will become a new and regular heading in EJPN: "Original clinical-historical contributions" to our field, Paediatric Neurology.

Details of Stuart Green's biography may be found in the references given below:

Thierry Deonna. Obituary Dr. Stuart H Green. *Eur J Paed Neurol* 2007;11:127–8.

John Stephenson. Stuart Green: an appreciation. *J Child Neurol* 2007;22:663–5

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