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I fully appreciate that it is nowadays quite impossible to restrict the practice of all plastic surgery to properly trained plastic surgeons. It may well be that Tagliacotian would not relish my performing some procedure upon him even though I am qualified so to do but I hope that he would be even more alarmed were I to remove his prostate, given that he still has one.

Yours faithfully

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## In reply to Tagliacotian

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Sir

The description by Tagliacotian of the correspondence which followed my letter to the Annals of the Royal College of Surgeons of England (January 1986) as petulant, is quite inappropriate and, I presume, occasioned by his being at a loss for the *mot juste*.

But I must not be unfair and puzzle him with foreign languages when he has such difficulties with his own. Perhaps the second sentence of his second paragraph is a misprint and should have read: "This epistle contained a warranted attack on a poorly considered paper written by two general surgeons . . ."

To suggest that the correspondence was fatuous implies that the Editor of the Annals made a bad decision in publishing it. Surely the random scribblings of Tagliacotian can hardly measure up to the sagacity of Mr Kirk who, incidentally, has no need to hide behind a *nom de plume*. I am glad, however, that Tagliacotian recognised my letter as contentious, for this it was intended to be. On the other hand he has clearly missed the point if he imagines that the letter was written to improve the image of plastic surgeons. It was written to draw attention to our plight, with which the second half of Tagliacotian's letter deals, and in so doing reiterates my thoughts on the subject. If no-one dares raise their voice about this matter there will be no future for plastic surgery. Years ago people went about saying "Let our results speak for themselves". They have, but it seems to the wrong audience who now are trying their hand at our work. Is this good or right? I venture to suggest that it is not and I hope to alert our colleagues to the dangers inherent in this situation.

Sir

This avid and long-time dermatologic surgical reader of the British Journal of Plastic Surgery found it marvelously exhilarating that the Trustees of the British Association of Plastic Surgeons would make the statement "there is no proscription right bestowed upon us to claim technical expertise as our own and belonging to no other". If all your compatriots thought that, and were gentlemanly, many of our mutual professional difficulties would disappear. If plastic surgeons did not confront their brethren with a "holier than thou" countenance of infallibility much unpleasantness would evaporate. This problem is accelerated by your brethren's knowledge that plastic surgeons do not do God's perfect surgical work at all times. None of us can claim that holiness either as individuals or by speciality.

I have the strongest hopes that practitioners of plastic surgery would keep themselves "in the forefront of technical advance", thus assuring the survival of your speciality.

Unfortunately in the United States a few plastic surgeons have embarked upon a course of deliberately and maliciously precipitating lawsuits against members of other specialties. This will bring mayhem everywhere as others gird for similar attacks in retaliation. I hope these extremes do not cross the ocean, and I believe the awareness of the Trustees of BAPS will be of import.

Yours faithfully

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