

An Early Start

- Doctor:** Nice to see you Gordon, long time since you've been in.
- Patient:** Yes, doctor. I have been a bit busy at work of late. Glad you were able to fit me in. Good of you to see me at this time of day.
- Doctor:** No problem. There really hasn't been that much demand for these half past six slots, usually I'm just watching the sun rise on my own, playing solitaire. What I can I do for you today, Gordon?
- Patient:** Well, doctor. I feel tired all the time. Worn out.
- Doctor:** Any worries, Gordon?
- Patient:** To tell you the truth, I am in a bit of a financial mess.
- Doctor:** Credit cards? Overdraft?
- Patient:** Something like that, yes. Lent some other people's money out. Not sure if I can pay them back.
- Doctor:** Surely, it can't be that bad. How much it is? Few thousand? Twenty, thirty?
- Patient:** Actually, doctor - a hundred.
- Doctor:** Come, come Gordon. These days, a hundred grand is not that much.
- Patient:** Not a hundred grand doc. A hundred billion!
- Doctor:** Oh! I see what you mean! No wonder you're feeling stressed. Anything else?
- Patient:** I've recently been promoted. I used to be head of finance at work but the old MD retired and the board thought I would make a good replacement. Only been doing the job for a few months. But I feel a bit out of my depth. Problems with the staff, you know. Promised the security chaps a pay rise but thought we could save a few quid by not backdating it. They didn't like that, I can tell you. Then there was the fiasco with staff data. Couple of CDs went missing - all their personal details on. That caused quite a stink. Just got over that and then a few of the board were found to have not declared donations they had received. Lost one of my key men due to that. Not sure what to do. Doesn't feel like I'm in control. Heart thumping, pounding head. Sweating. Not sleeping well at all.
- Doctor:** Well, I think the best thing is, I will write to occupational health at your work and we'll get them involved.
- Patient:** I wish you could! Unfortunately, I didn't really see the point of keeping the occupational health team going. Thought it would save some money, pay off some of the debts and things. So we got rid of occupational health. Now we have an American company in, they have a couple of staff based on site. Not a patch on the service we used to get and actually costs us more. See what I mean, doc. I'm just not

making good decisions. I don't seem to be able to hack it. I'm not cut out to be the MD. Any chance of some tablets, something to calm me down?

Doctor: Well, we're not supposed to give tablets out for anxiety and stress any more. We're supposed to offer you counselling instead.

Patient: I'll take the counselling then.

Doctor: Problem is Gordon, the counselling service is oversubscribed. Twelve month waiting list, minimum. The health money has gone on all these fancy new, privately run polyclinics and the NHS computer system, which still isn't working.

Patient: What can you do, doc? I'm desperate. I can't take it anymore. Just give me a few days off work, then. Can I have a sick note?

Doctor: Sorry, Gordon. We don't have those anymore, new government initiative. We have "well notes" instead.

Patient: But I'm sick! I don't feel well. I can't cope at work.

Doctor: I know that and you know that but the government wants to know what you *can* do. What do you think you would be able to do, Gordon?

Patient: I don't know. I just don't know. I don't seem to be able to do anything well. I can't concentrate. I've lost my confidence.

Doctor: Perhaps some gardening or how about pushing the tea trolley?

Patient: Yes, you're right. I think I could manage that. How does it work then, doc?

Doctor: Well, I sign you a well note that says you can push the tea trolley and your work pay you...at the hourly rate of a tea trolley pusher. Hopefully it won't be for long and then you will be able to get back to managing the company on your normal pay.

Patient: No sick note then.

Doctor: No sick note. Here's your well note.

Patient: Okay, thanks again for seeing me. One of my work colleagues came with me. Any chance of seeing him? He's pretty stressed out as well. Trouble with the unions, again.

Doctor: Sure, send him in.

Patient: Cheerio doctor. It's nice to know there are GPs like you still around. Perhaps I might be able to return the favour one day.

Doctor: *That* would be nice. See you in two weeks then Gordon. Ah, hello Mr Johnson. Gordon said you were waiting. Pleased to meet you. How can I help?