

There 'Otter' Be a Reason . . .

Your article "The Mystery of an Anticancer Mechanism" (January-February 2010) was fascinating. Vera Gorbunova is doing groundbreaking work in cancer research.

One correction should be pointed out, however. Although Dr. Gorbunova may well have compared otter tissue to the tissues of other mammals (mice, squirrels, gerbils, capybara, chinchillas, naked mole rats), otters are not rodents.

The other mammals mentioned in the article belong to the order Rodentia, and possess rodents' trademark ever-growing incisors. Otters, however, belong to the order Carnivora and family Mustelidae, along with weasels, skunks, and badgers.

*Suzanne Richardson-White '93
Athens, Georgia*

Regarding the great article about the anticancer mechanism, I am confused by the inclusion of otters with the other rodents. When I graduated from the UR as a biology major in 1966, the otter was firmly in the camp of the carnivores, not the rodents. Have things changed? Thanks again for the very interesting and informative article.

*Stephen Barnes '66
Tenants Harbor, Maine*

Editor's Note: We heard from several biology majors—as well as other astute readers—who wondered about the "out of order" inclusion of otters in the list of animals in our story about Vera Gorbunova, an associate professor of biology, and her team's efforts to understand the biology of cancer in a small set of rodents. We mistakenly included otters as part of the research. Otters aren't part of Gorbunova's project because, well, they aren't rodents.

The Doctor Ought to Listen

I loved your story about listening ("The Doctor Is Listening," January-February 2010).

I worked (the now politically correct term) for over 20 years as a stay-at-home mom, raising four children. Yet my UR-trained mind made it impossible for me to stop thinking, thinking, thinking (and isn't there a world of material for psychoanalysis

and social commentary right there?). Without benefit of even one minute of graduate school, I came up with my own powerful and verifiable hypothesis about "other mothers" during chance encounters at the grocery store, the playground, the library, and so forth.

My hypothesis was that within 10 seconds of initiating conversation, even mothers who have never met before would disclose to each other their chief concern about their children. Examples might include "He's not walking yet," "She bites the other babies," "There are only two foods I can get him to eat."

In 2000 I enrolled in a graduate counseling program where I encountered narrative therapy, which validates the expert status and deeply held wisdom we all possess about our own lives. As therapists-in-training, we were taught to listen for what the clients already knew about their questions and struggles, and to regard this content as infinitely more significant and valid than any so-called "interventions" we might unilaterally impose.

Once I got over my shock at hearing phrases such as "how the client stories his life," and overcame my aversion to using "language" as a verb, I became fascinated by the seemingly undeniable truth: the stories we tell ourselves and each other create our experience and sustain our understanding of who we are and how the world is supposed to work.

Hearing that young doctors-to-be are being trained at the U of R to listen to their patients' stories gives me nothing but hope for the future, and no less than pride in my alma mater.

*Clare Westropp Evancie '76
Weybridge, Vt.*

The article "The Doctor Is Listening" in the January-February issue was very interesting.

I've been retired for 27 years but I recall trying to promote something basic to the content of your article.

I may be wrong but I believe it was [influential turn-of-the-20th-century physician and medical educator Sir William] Osler who admonished physicians and students to "Listen to the patient. He is giving you the diagnosis." I tried to practice in that

light. I hope that the program you describe takes hold in medical practice.

*Julian Alexander '49M (MD)
Rochester*

Life Ought to Be Unwrapped

Kudos to Laura Carstensen '78 ("Live Fully; Retire at 85," Alumni Gazette, January-February). At 62 years of age, I realized my lifelong dream of attaining my PhD. Thank you, U of R.

I began my fifth working career as a research associate at Northeastern Ohio Universities Colleges of Medicine and Pharmacy, moved over to faculty and, at 78 years of age, am an adjunct assistant professor in the behavioral and community health sciences department where I teach several classes, serve on a palliative care committee, a faith/medicine initiative task force, and on an interview committee for prospective students.

In addition, I volunteer at the Grief Care Place and at a migrant worker's clinic, carry out a grief ministry at my church and teach Bible study classes. My faith and my family remain my focus and strength. I am involved in my children's and my 10 grandchildren's lives, attending games, plays, award ceremonies, graduations, and helping with fundraisers and term papers.

I am a widow and a lung cancer survivor but refuse to let that limit or define my life. Life is a beautiful gift that we all must learn to continually unwrap.

*Patricia Pakan '93W (PhD)
Stow, Ohio*

A Track Correction, Part 2

In our attempt to correctly place the Emma Willard School in Troy, N.Y., in the January-February issue (Letters), we mistakenly identified Marilyn Johnson Burday '59 as a teacher at Emma Willard. We should have said that Ruth Burday, the daughter of Marilyn and S. Zane Burday '57, '61M (MD), is a history teacher at Emma Willard. We apologize for the error.

Review welcomes letters and will print them as space permits. Letters may be edited for brevity and clarity. Unsigned letters cannot be used. Send letters to Box 270044, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY 14627-0044; rochrev@rochester.edu.