Inevitably, the evidence that joggers are at least strengthening their bones is also equivocal. Although bone density at the hip may increase, no reduction in osteoporotic related fractures has been shown.10 If all that's not enough, a Swedish study11 has shown an increased risk of arrhythmia in elderly male joggers (average age 73.2 years). The potential for sudden death during jogging is well documented and probably represents a cardiovascular event. There has also been some suggestion that too much jogging can actually impair the immune system and increase the incidence of minor infection, although this seems to be speculative. Some runners report an improvement in visual acuity during exercise (so perhaps these Canadians can see their mountains more clearly than I), but this seems to be a subjective experience (they only think they can see them more clearly), and, except for perhaps a small reduction in intraocular pressure, no effects on the eye are apparent.12 13 There is a report of some improvement in the symptoms of diverticular disease after jogging,14 although I doubt many joggers have this in mind as they don't their trainers. And then there is joggers nipple, but we won't dwell on that!

Now you may have formed the impression that I don't jog, and you would be mostly right. I'm certainly not a habitual jogger, although I do dabble occasionally. I still feel that man is essentially a Stone Age animal living in the modern world. For the life of me, I can't imagine Stone Age man jogging. Running like hell to escape a snack-seeking carnivore: yes. Strolling along collecting berries: yes. Jogging: I just can't see it. It seems so unnatural.

So how do I feel about my jogging compatriots? I still have this deeply British admiration for the “no pain, no gain” philosophy. Mostly I hope the joggers do enjoy running (but I do wish they'd smile). I will continue to extol the virtues of the healthy lifestyle to my patients, and I'm sure exercise is in there somewhere. However, I’m not convinced that the joggers will need my services any less than my “normal” patients—whenever they are!

Now—anyone fancy a nice walk?

P I MIDDLETON
The Caxton Surgery, Oswestry, Shropshire

Encouraging stair walking

A motivational poster placed at a choice point between escalator and stair use, in a city centre underground station, doubled stair use (fig 1).1 The study also showed that men and boys used the stairs more than women and girls both before and after the poster intervention, but there was no obvious explanation of this finding.2 Follow up interviews with 200 stair users or escalator users showed that motivational posters can change the behaviour of people who are not very active as not all those using the stairs were regularly active. The barriers to stair use were time, laziness, and effort, while the motivations for stair use were saving time and improving health. Women cited laziness as the key barrier to stair climbing and in comparison with men perceived stair climbing as requiring more effort.3

The study results led to the design and distribution of stair walking promotional posters throughout Scottish workplaces by the Health Education Board for Scotland. Within Glasgow a new promotional campaign was developed using life size cut out cartoon characters placed at the foot of escalators, as posters on platforms, and as advertising cards on trains (fig 2). These materials encouraged stair use and had straplines explaining the health benefits of small amounts of physical activity. The campaign has run for two 12-week periods in all Glasgow underground venues. Several other studies have shown the efficacy of motivational signs promoting stair use.

NANETTE MUTRIE
Centre for Exercise Science and Medicine, University of Glasgow

AVRIL BLAMEY
Health Promotion Department, Greater Glasgow Health Board, Scotland

If jogging is a joke, who should have the last laugh?

P I Middleton

*Br J Sports Med* 2000 34: 143-144
doi: 10.1136/bjsm.34.2.143