


**Profile**  
**Dr Ellie Cannon**
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**Role**

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# Life as a GP columnist and media doctor

**Dr Ellie Cannon**, resident GP at the *Mail on Sunday* and *Sky News*, reveals how she came to work in the media, her favourite diagnosis – and her greatest celebrity compliment

**What's the best thing about working as a high-profile media GP?**

I'm doing something valuable that helps people understand their health. One day I spoke on *Sky News* about vaccinations, and people got in touch to say that because I had explained it, they would now go for a jab. Professor Brian Cox called one of my articles a 'triumph of science communication'; that was cool.

**What's the hardest thing about combining a media career with general practice?**

There aren't enough hours in the day. I work four sessions a week in a practice I love, and that leaves me with three days for writing and media work. The week gets pretty hectic but I can't imagine any working parent finds their week 'calm'.

**What was your 'big break'?**

I met someone who was setting up the health section of the *Mail on Sunday* and she asked me to find her a GP who could write. Despite having two little children and my membership exams to sit, I said 'I'll give it a go', and that was that. I have always written: I had a short story published while I was at medical school after I did a special study module about medicine and the arts.

**What time do you get up?**

If I need to be at Sky, I get up at 6am for a 7.30am programme. Otherwise, 7.30am (depending on what my kids are up to).

**What one trait do you most deplore in your colleagues?**

There are still far too many doctors around with a God complex (although none at my practice, thankfully).

**At work, when are you happiest?**

When I diagnose scombroid – so satisfying.

**What's the most common advice you give patients?**

I'm all for self-care, so probably: 'let's

watch and wait, you don't need any medicine at the moment'.

**What phrase do you most overuse?**

'I think a man of your age with a sore throat for 12 hours should be looking after himself, not phoning the doctor.'

**How would your patients describe you?**

I'd like to think they think I'm straight-talking but sympathetic. Some would call me the 'one who doesn't give antibiotics'.

**What's the most common assumption GPs make about your media career?**

There are a couple of GPs who seek to undermine the work of media GPs, implying we're not as intelligent or have conflicts of interest that affect our work. Well, I have no conflicts of interest and a degree from Cambridge, so I ignore their rhetoric. Most GPs, though, are supportive in the same way I am of my colleagues' non-clinical activities.

**Junk food: ban it, tax it, or enjoy it?**

Ban it. The food industry is to blame for the obesity epidemic: the creation of food 'concepts' over the past few decades has turned our diets on their heads, for the worse. And you can't blame people if the BOGOF offers are on crisps, not spinach.

**Are you motivated by money?**

If I was, I'd have gone into the City like the other Cambridge graduates.

**What makes you angry?**

How long have you got? Homophobia, people parking in disabled bays and people who abuse the receptionists.

**Most embarrassing consultation?**

When the patient turned out to be an ex-boyfriend. More embarrassing for him, I reckon.

**Career highlight so far?**

I delivered a baby in the toilet of my GP surgery. Quite a crazy start to the day.



There are still far too many doctors with a God complex


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