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## Pümpfrage Redivivus

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**To the Editor:** The Commentary on the art of pimping by Dr Detsky<sup>1</sup> reviewed the history of pimping as outlined in a previous article published in *JAMA* in 1989 by Brancati.<sup>2</sup> One of us (S.L., a researcher and clinician, the Pimper), while reviewing this article with the other (B.S., a medical student working in the laboratory, the Pimpee), recalled the previous article and dug it out of old files. Breaking one of the cardinal rules of proper pimping, in which the pimper bones up on obscure historical facts so that he or she can pimp the student, we reviewed the yellowed pages of the previous article together. (As mentioned by Detsky, we now practice a kinder and gentler form of pimping.)

In discussing the origins of pimping in his 1989 article, Brancati<sup>2</sup> quoted Harvey in 1628, described “Pümpfrage or pimp questions” recorded by Koch in 1889, and described unpublished notes from Abraham Flexner observing Osler pimping his students on rounds in 1916. What Detsky apparently missed was that these historical references represented what Brancati referred to as feigned erudition, a form of bluff usually used by the pimpee to respond to the pimper.

Allow us to take a page from Detsky’s Pimping Protection Procedures<sup>1</sup> and pimp back. Of note is that none of the historical references bore any citations. More importantly, in subsequent letters to the editor,<sup>3,4</sup> Brancati was challenged on the accuracy of his historical references and the existence of the word *Pümpfrage*. In his response, Brancati<sup>4</sup> admitted that “despite my best effort to feign erudition, my historical attributions were nothing more than clever bluffs.” Brancati thanked the letter writer for demonstrating the important attending skills of “calling the bluff and chastising the bluffer.” In reviewing the articles published in *JAMA* 2 decades apart, it becomes clear that Brancati has indeed perpetrated a pimping for the ages.

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## References

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