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Moon over Surrey

Nancy Hotte's letter¹ concerning a new method for prostate examination confirms that the conventional digital rectal examination with the patient in the left lateral position involves an awkward contortion of arm and hand for right-handed physicians. A left-handed doctor probably has no difficulty with this position.

For several years I have been using a method in which the examiner remains seated and the patient stands, assuming the "moon" position. The patient faces away from the examiner and bends over to 90°, with his hands on a chair. Alternatively, the patient may stand flexed to 90°, with his chest on the examining couch. In this position both right- and left-handed physicians have ease of access to the prostate gland. I find that I can palpate further up the prostate when I examine in this manner. The posterior rectal wall is examined by changing the hand from the prone to the supine position. The examiner may wish to stand at this point.

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