



A Japanese team has come up with an automated electrocardiogram based screening tool for obstructive sleep apnoea. They used the tool to detect cyclic variation of heart rate in a large scale controlled clinical setting, having applied the algorithm to electrocardiograms extracted from all night polysomnograms recorded in over 862 people referred for a diagnostic sleep study. The cyclic variation of heart rate index performed well in identifying patients with moderate to severe obstructive sleep apnoea, and performance was unaffected by older age or cardiac autonomic dysfunction (*Circulation Arrhythmia and Electrophysiology* 2010; doi:10.1161/circep.110.958009).

A systematic review of randomised controlled trials that gave mothers vitamin A supplements after delivery has failed to find any benefit to their breastfed babies. Neither mortality nor morbidity in the first year of life was improved by maternal supplementation. The seven trials were from developing countries and the researchers say only prevention of death or morbidity would be sufficient justification for introducing this intervention into public health programmes (*International Journal of Epidemiology* 2010;39:1217-26, doi:10.1093/ije/dyq080).

Minerva has never been a fan of eating breakfast but may be beginning to regret this long held behaviour. An Australian study reports that skipping breakfast over a long period may have detrimental effects on cardiometabolic health. After adjustment for age, sex, and lifestyle factors, those who skipped breakfast in both childhood and adulthood had a larger waist circumference and higher fasting insulin, total cholesterol, and low density lipoprotein cholesterol compared with those who ate breakfast at both time points (*American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 2010;92:1316-25, doi:10.3945/ajcn.2010.30101).

The air quality where you live seems to be more important than that where you work. A Swedish study blames traffic exposure at home for the prevalence of asthma and asthma symptoms over 12 months. The associations were not stronger when total traffic exposure was estimated, nor was there a significant effect of air exposure at work, commuting time to work, or daily time spent in traffic (*BMC Public Health* 2010;10:716, doi:10.1186/1471-2458-10-716).

[The pictures from this article have been removed because the consent was not valid. The first showed an eroded nose, the second showed slightly greater erosion. Ed, BMJ]

This woman's nose is being slowly eroded by rubbing—there is a six month difference between pictures. She has neuroacanthocytosis, an autosomal recessive disorder that causes involuntary choreiform movements, seizures, cognitive impairment, and difficulty with speech and eating. In some cases it is associated with motor stereotypy, usually lip and tongue biting. We have found no previously reported cases involving the nose. She was reviewed by plastic surgeons and otolaryngology teams but no intervention was possible. The disease is progressive and incurable so she continues to rub at her nose, causing its destruction.

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Consent obtained from next of kin.

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In the age of austerity it's good to know that there are some valid diagnostic tests that won't break the bank. A London team found that patients with early Parkinson's disease have a frequent and severe olfactory deficit that correlates well with disease severity, symptom duration, and dopamine transporter scans (DaTSCAN). The sensitivities of the smell identification test and DaTSCAN are both high (86% and 92%). Neither test is disease specific, but the smell test is much the cheaper of the two (*QJM* 2010;103:941-52, doi:10.1093/qjmed/hcq142).

Older women should make sure they get enough vitamin D to protect their brains. A large French population based study looked at the effects of dietary vitamin D and split their data into two groups: women who were consuming the recommended intake of 35 µg or more per week, and those who were consuming less. Intake was estimated from a food frequency questionnaire. Those in the lower intake group scored significantly less well on the cognitive tests, and an association was seen between inadequate levels of vitamin D and cognitive impairment (*Neurology* 2010;75:1810-16, doi:10.1212/wnl.0b013e3181fd6352).

It seemed like a good idea at the time: noting that the healing potential in the avascular regions of the meniscus is very limited, and that improving vascularity might be a way to improve healing of meniscal lesions, researchers postulated that local application of vascular endothelial growth factor would induce angiogenesis and improve meniscal healing. However, neither was observed among 18 sheep tested (*Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery Am* 2010;92:2682-91 doi:10.2106/JBJS.I.01481).

Scientists have discovered that the p53 tumour cell suppressor effect is triggered only by aggressive tumour cells, not by those at an early stage. There appears to be a threshold above which the body's usual tumour surveillance mechanisms are triggered by oncogenic signals. Most established tumours contain sections at all stages of oncogenic evolution, so p53 restoration as a potential therapeutic approach may at best help contain the tumour's growth rather than eradicating it completely (*Nature* 2010;468:572-5, doi:10.1038/nature09535 and 567-71 doi:10.1038/nature09526).

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