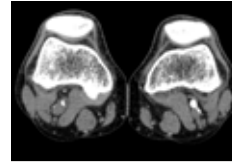


# MINERVA



**A healthy 45 year old man with an unusual case of calf pain**  
**Try the picture quiz in Endgames, p 429**

A patient's anxiety is thought to affect the dose of propofol needed to induce loss of consciousness for a general anaesthetic, but studies have reported conflicting results, which might be accounted for by the haemodynamic effects of anxiety (heart rate and cardiac output). A study of 45 women undergoing gynaecological surgery reported a significant relation between heart rate and propofol dose when consciousness was lost, but not between anxiety and propofol dose. Perioperative anxiety, however, was significantly related to increased heart rate (*Anesthesia and Analgesia* 2010;110:89-93, doi:10.1213/ANE.0b013e3181c5bd11).

Patients of South Asian origin admitted to London hospitals for strokes appear to have different risk factors than their white counterparts. They showed a higher frequency of hypertension, diabetes, and hyperlipidaemia than white patients. They also tended to be younger and to smoke less than the white group. The authors of a study in *Q/M* say that South Asians comprise the largest ethnic minority population in the UK and recommend that secondary prevention programmes should be tailored for this community (2010;103:17-21, doi:10.1093/qjmed/hcp148).

A Japanese team hypothesised that many patients with diabetic retinopathy have unidentified heart disease and could benefit from early coronary artery bypass grafting. They devised a randomised trial in which half of the recruits with type 2 diabetes, who were under ophthalmological care, were sent for cardiac investigations to establish the presence or otherwise of ischaemic heart disease. About a quarter of the patients sent for investigation were confirmed to have previously unrecognised and substantial stenotic coronary artery disease (*Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery* 2010;139:92-7, doi:10.1016/j.jtcvs.2009.04.005).

A fun and engaging diary designed to help children chart their own seizures is available free at [www.ncype.org.uk/epilepsy/freezeizurediary](http://www.ncype.org.uk/epilepsy/freezeizurediary). It's full of pictures and cartoons donated by over 50 famous children's illustrators and is said to be very helpful to doctors when diagnosing and managing epilepsy in children.

How sensible is it for people with type 2 diabetes to regularly monitor their blood sugar? It's mainly a cost issue, because regular monitoring seems to have little clinical benefit. A Canadian audit showed that use of test strips increased by almost 250% from 1997 to 2008; about half the recipients were at low



A drug user presented eight hours after he administered an injection of heroin into the dorsum of his scarred forearm. He had a history of chronic cellulitis and ulcerated, but inactive, skin lesions on his forearm resulting from intravenous and subcutaneous drug abuse. The patient displayed systemic signs of sepsis and had an expanding, indurated, oedematous lesion at the injection site that was bullous and multiloculated but was not tender. After radical debridement and antibiotic treatment, bacteriological investigation identified *Bacillus anthracis*. The ongoing outbreak of anthrax infection in heroin users in Scotland, probably from contamination of heroin with anthrax spores, has resulted in several deaths.

James Stevenson, consultant, Julie Mardon, consultant, Alan Exton, registrar, Emergency Department, Crosshouse Hospital, Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, Scotland KA2 0BE

Patient consent obtained.

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risk of drug induced hypoglycaemia. The authors call for more focused policies on monitoring, and they suggest that money saved through selective testing could be diverted to interventions with greater effectiveness for these patients (*CMAJ* 2010;182:35-8 doi:10.1503/cmaj.091017).

Minerva has her good and bad days—but what of optimism and pessimism, which are generally viewed as cultivatable personality traits? A study of data from the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis used regression analyses to estimate associations of optimism and pessimism with inflammatory and clotting markers in nearly 7000 people aged 45 to 84 without clinical heart disease. The results suggest that pessimism is related to higher levels of systemic inflammation, and the association is independent of depression and cynical mistrust. Health behaviour, body mass index, hypertension, and diabetes probably have a mediating role (*Psychosomatic Medicine* 2010;72:134-40, doi:10.1097/PSY.0b013e3181cb981b).

"Third-hand smoke" is the term for tobacco smoke residues found on everyday surfaces, which can react with chemical components in the air to create powerful carcinogens called tobacco-specific nitrosamines. The compounds formed are very stable; scientists report that less than half of those they studied had degraded over two hours after the tobacco had been deposited. Children and babies probably receive greater exposure because the most likely exposure pathway is through surfaces—skin,

clothes, and furniture (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 2010; published online 8 February, doi:10.1073/pnas.0912820107).

A doctor with a history of autoimmune hepatitis, thyroiditis, and anti-phospholipid syndrome was found in a taxi unable to tell the driver her address. Two days later she became aphasic, unresponsive, and rigid, and developed a high fever. Every test, including brain scans, came back negative. Her doctors eventually decided that the sick patient with normal test results was suffering from the rare Hashimoto's encephalopathy and she made a good recovery with pulsed steroids. In the words of Sherlock Holmes: "When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth" (*Q/M* 2010;103:117-9, doi:10.1093/qjmed/hcp150).

The latest revision of the WHO classification of leukaemias didn't include the category of "Friday leukaemia"—the subgroup of acute leukaemias that first present on a Friday and cause a flurry of activity before the weekend—although the phenomenon is well known to haematologists. A German team retrospectively identified 197 patients with newly diagnosed leukaemia. They report that despite its appearance as a discrete disease entity with regard to incidence, Friday leukaemia had no distinct biological or prognostic features, and it was not characterised by impaired survival (*Blood* 2010;115:912).

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