



- EDITORIAL, p 7
- FEATURE, p 16

NEWS

- 1 **Hunt loses court battle over Lewisham Hospital**
Health Research Authority outlines plans to improve transparency of clinical trials
- 2 **Childhood mortality varies threefold across UK authorities**
Hunt's choice to chair Monitor withdraws
- 3 **Former New Labour health adviser is new chief executive of NHS England**
Food firms' pledge on saturated fat is "thinnest of thin interventions"
- 4 **Fashion for swaddling increases babies' risk of hip abnormalities**
Medical tourism is a profitable source of income for the NHS, study finds
DIY and gardening can prolong life in over 60s, study finds
- 5 **A European film festival for health**
NHS is told to improve hospital complaints system



Hunt loses appeal to close services at Lewisham Hospital, p 1

RESEARCH

RESEARCH PAPERS

- 11 **Bariatric surgery versus non-surgical treatment for obesity: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials**
Viktoria L Gloy et al
- 12 **Efficacy of anti-inflammatory or antibiotic treatment in patients with non-complicated acute bronchitis and discoloured sputum: randomised placebo controlled trial**
Carl Llor et al
- 13 **Including post-discharge mortality in calculation of hospital standardised mortality ratios: retrospective analysis of hospital episode statistics**
Maurice E Pouw et al
● EDITORIAL, p 8
- 14 **Risk of moderate to advanced kidney disease in patients with psoriasis: population based cohort study**
Joy Wan et al


COMMENT

BMJ CONFIDENTIAL

- 6 **Iain Chalmers**
In the latest in its series asking the movers and shakers of the medical world about work, life, and less serious matters, the *BMJ* spoke to a pioneer of evidence based medicine



EDITORIALS

- 7 **Paying for migrant healthcare**
Johanna Hanefeld et al
- 
- 8 **Mortality indicators used to rank hospital performance**
J Nicholl et al
● RESEARCH, p 13
 - 9 **Why can't we improve the timeliness of cancer diagnosis in children, teenagers, and young adults?**
Lorna A Fern et al
 - 10 **What can England's NHS learn from Canterbury New Zealand?**
Nicholas Mays and Judith Smith

FEATURES

- 15 **New NHS boss: nothing simple about this Simon**
His appointment as the head of NHS England has been greeted with messianic enthusiasm. But who is the real Simon Stevens, asks Peter Davies
- 
- 16 **Are migrant patients really a drain on European health systems?**
All over Europe access to health services by migrants is being tightened, but does the evidence show this is necessary? Sophie Arie reports
 - 17 **Data Briefing** John Appleby
 - 18 **Nominations open for 2014 awards**
The BMJ Awards 2014 will honour doctors making a difference in the UK. Rebecca Coombes invites you to enter and explains what's new this year

ESSAY

- 20 **Overdiagnosis: when good intentions meet vested interests**
The pursuit of longer healthy life has led to more people being labelled as diseased. Iona Heath examines the factors behind this paradox and argues that we need to find the courage to resist overdiagnosis and instead accept the inevitabilities of ageing

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Champion of HPV vaccine, p 26

COMMENT

LETTERS

- 22 Discrimination in the MRCGP exam
- 23 Collaboration with industry; NHS health checks

OBSERVATIONS

REALITY CHECK

- 24 Act now to fight chronic procrastination disorder
Ray Moynihan

PERSONAL VIEW

- 25 I was sexually harassed as a junior by senior doctors: it still goes on, and it needs to stop
Anonymous



OBITUARIES

- 26 Anne Szarewski
Clinician who led research showing testing for HPV on cells taken during cervical screening would pick up cases of pre-cancer that were missed by standard testing
- 27 Charles Henry de Boer; Michael Frank Butler; Ian Trevor Field; Ken Owen; Ian Peacock; Donald Winstock

LAST WORDS

- 39 Why I worry about large international studies
Des Spence
- The saviour of Hunter's collection Wendy Moore

EDUCATION

CLINICAL REVIEW

- 28 Management of nocturnal enuresis
Patrina H Y Caldwell et al

PRACTICE

RATIONAL TESTING

- 33 Abnormal liver function tests in pregnancy
Ian Walker et al

A PATIENT'S JOURNEY

- 36 From haemochromatosis to liver transplant
Mike Davis and Phaedra Maria Tachtatzis

ENDGAMES

- 38 Quiz page for doctors in training

MINERVA

- 40 The health threats of thunderstorms, and other stories



Unusual case, p 38

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LEFT: TERIS PITARAKIS/AP/PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES

PICTURE OF THE WEEK

London has become the tuberculosis capital of western Europe. Last year, the city had about 3500 cases of tuberculosis—more than the Netherlands, Belgium, Greece, Norway, and Denmark combined (News, p 2). In an effort to stop the spread of the disease, health officials are taking to the streets of London to offer free check-ups with the help of a high tech van equipped with an x ray machine. The entire process from having an x ray picture taken to getting the results takes about 90 seconds.

RESPONSE OF THE WEEK

The fact that I am only the second person to post a response to the *BMJ*'s cover article suggests to me that the answer to 'Who's afraid of the GMC?' is most doctors who have reason to know anything about the way it operates.

One of the most pernicious tactics employed by the GMC case examiners is to accuse doctors of lack of insight if they have the presumption to deny their allegations, and therefore to escalate the matter because lack of insight is a reason to strike a doctor off. In an era when insight and constant reflection have become mandatory, we need an example from the GMC itself. I would like to know how the GMC audits its own performance, and how, for example, it scrutinises the roles of complainants, case examiners, and its own expert witnesses in prolonging cases that are then found to have no credible evidence base.

Hilarie Williams, specialty doctor, Imperial College NHS Trust, London, UK, in response to "GMC and vulnerable doctors: too blunt an instrument?" (*BMJ* 2013;347:f6230)

MOST READ

Saturated fat is not the major issue
Comparative effectiveness of exercise and drug interventions on mortality outcomes
Academic performance of ethnic minority candidates and discrimination in the MRCPG examinations between 2010 and 2012
Fruit consumption and risk of type 2 diabetes
Aircraft noise and cardiovascular disease near Heathrow airport in London

BMJ.COM POLL

Last week's poll asked:
"Have you witnessed or experienced sexual harassment by a colleague?"

30% voted yes
(total 956 votes cast)

SEE PERSONAL VIEW, p 25

This week's poll asks:
"Should patients with psychosis be paid to adhere to maintenance treatment?"

▶ *BMJ* 2013;347:f5782

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EDITOR'S CHOICE

Boundary crossings

It seems that the founding principle of the NHS—being free to everyone at the point of care—is ultimately the source of its current predicament

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The UK government's new Immigration Bill has caused ructions among politicians, health economists, and the medical profession. The resulting fallout continues to smoulder, but it is often fuelled by perception rather than fact. John Appleby (p 17) presents the facts about the costs to the NHS of treating non-UK residents, the proposed changes in the bill, and how much money they might save. Theoretically the proposals could increase NHS revenue by £500m, but will they in practice?

"Well, it's possible," Appleby says. "But there are many uncertainties." The crux of which seems to be the government's admission that "a fundamentally different system and supporting processes" would be needed. It doesn't sound easy, or cheap—in her editorial, Johanna Hanefeld and colleagues say that the administrative cost of collecting this money is about £3m over 10 years (p 7).

More importantly, is it necessary to restrict access to health services by migrants? Sophie Arie (p 16) unpicks whether European migrants are the drain on resources that they are perceived to be.

According to the 2013 International Migration Outlook report, "the fiscal impact of immigration is close to zero" and "most immigrants do not come for social benefits, they come to find work and to improve their lives."

Despite the government's assertions about the cost of so called health tourism, accurate data are hard to find. But recent research suggests that Britain actually exports more health tourists than it imports. Many other EU countries' policies are more stringent than

the UK's, made possible because of the fundamental difference in how patients pay for services. Patients pay upfront, then claim back the costs through social security and insurance programmes. So it seems that the founding principle of the NHS—being free to everyone at the point of care—is ultimately the source of its current predicament.

Crossing geographical boundaries is not all the NHS has to worry about. According to a senior female doctor, crossing personal and professional boundaries is also a problem. She describes her experiences of sexual harassment as a junior doctor, and being regularly criticised and humiliated by male consultant surgeons (p 25). One "made an offensive remark about the size of my breasts." Despite her rage and humiliation, she just bit her lip, "suppressed the tears, and carried on." Why? "I did not speak up because I did not know where to go for support. Would I have been labelled as a pathetic woman who could not take the heat?"

Such experiences are by no means limited to the NHS; the BBC has recently announced it will review sexual harassment allegations that came out of the Respect at Work report. The NHS would be wise to follow the BBC and survey the extent of the problem within its organisation.

This week we launch the annual BMJ awards. Details of categories and how to enter are on page 18 and at www.thebmjawards.com.

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