

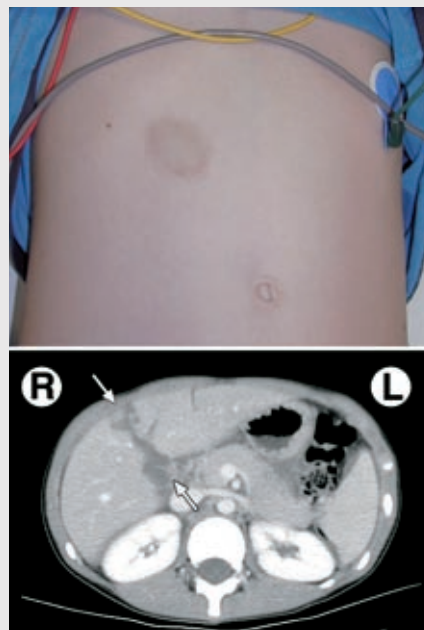
MINERVA

The residents of Rotterdam were affected by famine in the spring of 1945, during the Dutch "hunger winter." An analysis of patients on the Rotterdam addiction treatment programme reports that patients receiving treatment for addiction had significantly increased odds of being exposed to famine during the first trimester of gestation. This finding did not apply to exposure during the second and third trimesters. These results support the notion that extreme malnutrition has a detrimental effect on crucial brain development in the first trimester and mental health in later life (*Addiction* 2008).

Two papers in the latest issue of the British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology—(2008;115:354-60; 2008;115:324-31) look at the fear of childbirth in first time mothers. The first study found that women with few social and psychological resources were most fearful, with 3.2% being fearful throughout pregnancy. Around 7.4% of women became fearful in later pregnancy, and a similar proportion lost their initial fear by the end of pregnancy. The second study found that 43.4% of women requesting delivery by caesarean section had more negative expectations of a vaginal delivery, possibly as a result of the influence of friends and family.

The drug industry has given up trying to bribe doctors with expensive trips abroad, but it is still hitting on journalists. On offer is a five day "press tour" to Switzerland, which promises participants a chance to "get to know more about the Swiss pharmaceutical industry and its export industries . . . from within." Despite first class train travel, the hotels are just "three star" and booze is excluded. Minerva has politely declined the invitation.

Marriages between distant cousins are more common in Iceland than in many other countries. Previous explanations included the preservation of land and wealth, but scientists now think a biological imperative also exists. A study that mapped kinship in all known Icelandic couples born between 1800 and 1965 found that couples related at the level of third and fourth cousins had the greatest reproductive success. This may reflect a biological balance between the downside of inbreeding and the benefits of maintaining a degree of genetic compatibility (*Science* 2008;319:813-6).



Patients with breast cancer who are diagnosed early, and who achieve a pathologically complete response to primary systemic chemotherapy, have a low rate of recurrence. But at a median follow-up of 45 months, it becomes clear that higher clinical stage at diagnosis and inflammatory breast cancer are associated with worse outcomes in the 12% who experience disease recurrence. Both factors act as prognostic indicators, regardless of initial response to treatment (*Oncologist* 2008;13:6-15).

An 86 year old man who needed a revision hip replacement after 10 years was expected to have evidence of aseptic loosening, but instead surgeons found watery pus in the joint. Culture revealed BCG. The bacterial strain was identical to that used in the intravesicular treatment of superficial bladder cancer he received 10 months earlier. Full antituberculous treatment was given after the hip revision and he remained in good health, as did his hip (*Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery (Br)* 2008;90-B:225-7).

Nearly half the people with HIV worldwide are women, so prevention measures that target women—such as the female condom—are needed. An Italian study found that people were open minded and interested in this innovation, but when it came to using it they balked (*Annali dell'Istituto Superiore di*

Blunt abdominal trauma to the right upper quadrant, with associated small superficial signs, must always be treated as important in children, as this case reminds us. A 9 year old boy presented with abdominal pain four hours after a fall at speed from his bicycle; he exhibited only a classic handlebar bruise. Because of localised tenderness he had a computed tomography scan, and only at this time did he begin to show signs of hypovolaemia with relative tachycardia. The scan shows a grade three laceration or transection of the liver. He had 500 ml of blood in the pelvis. He was managed conservatively and went home without further event.

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Sanità 2007;43:419-24). Men were most pessimistic from the point of view of sexual pleasure and were more psychologically upset by the idea of using it. The women reported more physical difficulties, such as problems inserting the condom and problems during sexual intercourse. The authors conclude that the women's objections are more likely to be overcome than those of the men, and that promotional strategies and training should be devised to increase the use of this device.

Men also report psychological problems in the neonatal intensive care unit. When they were asked about their concerns and level of comfort with regard to staff communication about their sick baby, an overarching theme emerged of lack of control. The fathers said that talking to a male doctor was a positive and useful experience. Receiving information consistently and in the form of short written materials on common conditions also helped them regain a sense of control (*Pediatrics* 2008;121:e215-22).

Hypothyroidism is three times more likely in women with rheumatoid arthritis than in the general population. And women with both conditions have a fourfold higher risk of cardiovascular disease than euthyroid women with arthritis. The presence of both conditions seems to amplify cardiovascular risk (*Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases* 2008;67:229-32).