The side of the road that traffic travels on is not supposed to affect safety, but this might not always be true. A paper in *Medical Hypotheses* suggests that some older people with brain lesions might be less aware of traffic on their left side (*Med Hypotheses* 2009;73:20-3, doi:10.1016/j.mehy.2009.01.044). Spatial orientation and attention to the external space are confined to the right side of the brain and can be affected by right sided lesions such as those caused by stroke. More people have attention and spatial deficits for the left than for the right side of their environment, which might prove more problematic when the traffic is moving on the right.

Calling all medics—the Medical Research Council is currently attempting to quantify the number of contacts we all have to better predict the spread of infection and any future pandemic. They realise that medics tend to be incredibly busy but are also among the most likely to have contact with infectious patients, so they’ve recruited researchers at Warwick University to devise a short questionnaire, which they’d like you to complete at www.contactsurvey.org/medical, where there are links to the scientific results.

Analysis of almost 10 000 patients reveals that percutaneous coronary intervention with paclitaxel eluting stents is a safe and effective treatment that should not be withheld on the basis of age alone. Data were pooled from the trials and registries of paclitaxel eluting stents specifically to assess the benefits relative to advancing age, including comparisons with bare metal stents. Compared with younger patients, people older than 70 had higher mortality rates but similar or lower rates of myocardial infarction, stent thrombosis, and target lesion revascularisation (*Circulation Cardiovascular Interventions* 2009, published 2 June, doi:10.1161/circinterventions.109.855221).

Fat cells are no longer to be dismissed as passive space fillers. A study in *Nature* suggests that they negatively regulate blood cell production in bone marrow (2009; published online 10 June, doi:10.1038/nature08099). Bone marrow that is rich in fat cells contains fewer blood forming stem cells and progenitors than fat cell free areas of bone marrow, and “fat free” mice generate new blood cells more quickly than wild type animals after bone marrow transplantation. Similar observations were made in mice treated with a drug that blocks fat cell production.

Major obstetric bleeds are worrying in any woman, but especially in Jehovah’s witnesses who refuse blood transfusions even when they would be life saving. A Dutch study estimates that women who are Jehovah’s witnesses have an increased risk of maternal death six times that of women who are not. Broken down, the risk is calculated as 130 times increased risk of death because of major obstetric haemorrhage, and 3.1 times increased risk for serious maternal morbidity, compared with the general Dutch population (*B/OG* 2009;116:1103-10, doi:10.1111/j.1471-0528.2009.02191.x).

A comparison of two commonly used eye drops for reducing intraocular pressure in primary angle closure glaucoma—bimatoprost and latanoprost—found little difference between the drugs in terms of efficacy, and the side effects were mild in both groups, with ocular irritation being the most common one. Bimatoprost, however, was associated with twice as many reports of an adverse effect as latanoprost (*British Journal of Ophthalmology* 2009;93:782-6, doi:10.1136/bjo.2008.144535).

Persuading young women to use condoms is critical to the prevention of HIV infection, but the degree to which they perceive themselves to be at risk limits condom use (*AIDS Care* 2009;21:561-6, doi:10.1080/09540120802301857). A Scottish qualitative study concludes that while condoms are considered the more readily available form of contraception, and the first method used, many young women quickly change to taking the pill. Prevention of infection was seen as secondary to prevention of pregnancy, and perceived risk lessens over time. Negative experiences such as dislike and failure of method must be addressed as well as negotiation skills.

Chronic widespread pain is usually triggered by behavioural and emotional factors, but vitamin D deficiency may also be a modifiable risk factor. A cross sectional population survey of white middle aged Britons reports a significant interaction between 25-hydroxyvitamin D and sex in relation to chronic widespread pain that was not fully explained by differences in lifestyle or social factors. The association persisted after full adjustments were made for women, but not for men (*Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases* 2009;68:817-22, doi:10.1136/ard.2008.090456).

**Cite this as:** BMJ 2009;338:b2456

**Cite this as:** BMJ 2009;338:b2428

**Cite this as:** BMJ 2009;338:b2428