



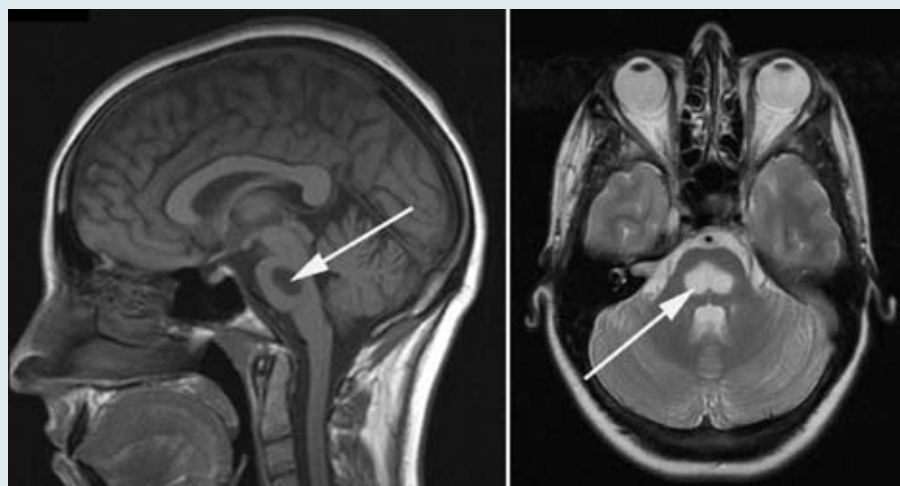
A case of progressive breathlessness in a 57 year old white man
Try the picture quiz in **ENDGAMES**, p 677

A multinational study of 387 European HIV positive women found that their contraceptive needs were largely unmet. Fourteen per cent had undergone termination of pregnancy, 62% had had at least one sexual encounter with a steady partner during the previous six months, and 51% had used condoms. Consistent condom use was a challenge for this population. Specific sexual and reproductive health issues predicted condom use: childbearing or miscarriage since the HIV diagnosis was made and having an HIV positive partner were relevant factors, as well as general use of contraceptives (*AIDS Care* 2010;22:919-26, doi:10.1080/09540121003758564).

Disability status at one month seems to be a reliable proxy for final outcome of ischaemic stroke, according to *Neurology* (2010;75:688-92, doi:10.1212/wnl.0b013e3181eee426). Final outcome is usually assessed three months after ischaemic stroke. But this study finds that global disability status at one month after an index stroke reliably estimates the outcome at three months (accounting for 65.6% of the variance) and may be relied on as an outcome measure in stroke quality improvement programmes and for clinical trials.

“Smoking shelters” are being re-introduced in hospitals around the UK for health reasons. Not because smoking is now being encouraged, but because patients have been caught secretly smoking in all sorts of unsafe places, such as stairwells, toilets, storerooms, and oxygen stores. Apparently only the operating theatres are free from smoke (www.telegraph.co.uk, 15 September 2010).

Covert observation of anaesthetists in the operating theatre reveals that they look at patient monitoring displays in one to two second glances performed frequently throughout the three segments of maintenance anaesthesia—post-induction, mid-maintenance, and immediately before the drapes come down. The monitors were in fact looked at only 5% of the time—less than previously reported. “At-a-glance” monitoring has implications, say the authors, for the design of patient monitoring displays, which obviously need to optimise the information obtained from brief glances



A 31 year old woman with a history of chronic alcoholism presented with short term memory loss after a minor head injury. Her blood tests were all normal apart from a macrocytosis. A computed tomography scan of her head was done to rule out subdural haematoma and showed an area of low attenuation within the pons. Magnetic resonance imaging showed a low T1 (left), high T2 (right) signal intensity lesion, confirming the diagnosis of central pontine myelinolysis. This condition comprises non-inflammatory demyelination of the pons, originally described in chronic alcoholism but also associated with rapid correction of hyponatraemia. The term osmotic myelinolysis is used for demyelination in extrapontine regions such as the midbrain, thalamus, and cerebellum.

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Patient consent obtained.

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(*Anesth Analg* 2010;111:653-8, doi:10.1213/ANE.0b013e3181e627d4).

Obese adults with metabolic syndrome might do well to acquire a fancy for blueberries (*Journal of Nutrition* 2010;140:1582-7, doi:10.3945/jn.110.124701). All berries have substantial cardioprotective benefits, owing to their high polyphenol content, but blueberries seem particularly potent. In a randomised controlled trial, 48 adults with metabolic syndrome drank a freeze dried blueberry drink or equivalent fluid for eight weeks. Blueberry supplemented participants enjoyed reduced systolic and diastolic blood pressures, but glucose and lipid profiles were untouched, apart from reductions in plasma oxidised low density lipoprotein.

Four cases in *The Oncologist* describe how hepatitis B virus can be reactivated in carriers during chemotherapy, leading to asymptomatic changes in liver function, or at worst fulminant

liver failure and death (2010;15:826-9, doi:10.1634/theoncologist.2009-0282). Despite recommendations that people chronically infected with hepatitis B virus receive pre-emptive treatment with antivirals, and that everyone be screened for the virus before starting cancer chemotherapy, this guidance has not apparently penetrated deeply into clinical practice—with occasional dramatic consequences.

An analysis of survival five years after total hip replacement in a series of patients older than 90 years shows that such surgery should not be discounted on the grounds of age alone. The complication rate exceeded that for younger patients, but almost half of those in receipt of new hips were still alive five years later (*Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery (British Edition)* 2010;92-B:1227-30, doi:10.1302.0301-620X.92B9.24432).

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