



**A woman with a suprarenal mass and hypertension**  
**Try the picture quiz in this week's ENDGAMES, p 607**

The Dutch Hunger Winter Families Study links early programming with long-term changes (*International Journal of Epidemiology* 2009;38:101-9, doi:10.1093/ije/dyn158). Fingerprints are permanently established in early pregnancy, and this study reports that diabetes diagnosed after age 50 is associated with a quantitative fingerprint marker—the mean dermatoglyphic ridge count difference between fingertips one and five—irrespective of birth weight. Fingerprints, suggest the authors, may be useful in researching early fetal metabolic programming.

The internet is a popular source of direct to consumer advertising, but the quality of information is variable. A review of hip resurfacing websites found a positive correlation between the overall score of a website (assessed by a tool designed to assess quality) and the score of each website in each assessment category—credibility, usability, “currentness” of information, content relevance, content accuracy and completeness, and disclosure and bias. Websites by implant companies, doctors, and hospitals scored badly. Websites with an independent credibility check, such as *Health on the Net*, scored twice the total scores of websites without (*Scottish Medical Journal* 2009;54:10-13).

In an attempt to ascertain whether neuromonitoring during thyroidectomy really can preserve the function of the recurrent laryngeal nerve, a Polish surgical team did a randomised controlled trial in which they used intraoperative neuromonitoring in addition to standard visualisation of the nerve. They found that this addition helped to reduce the incidence of transient nerve injuries, but did not reduce the incidence of permanent injuries to the nerve (*British Journal of Surgery* 2009;96:240-6, doi:10.1002/bjs.6417).

An Australian cohort study has confirmed the findings of case-control studies that being prescribed proton pump inhibitors is associated with a small but significant risk of being admitted to hospital with pneumonia (*MJA* 2009;190:114-6). Proton pump inhibitors are the most commonly used acid suppressant drugs, so the number of patients who could be affected in this way is potentially quite high. An increased risk of antibiotic dispensing was also noted in the group exposed to proton pump inhibitors, although most cases of pneumonia that resulted in hospital admission were not bacterial.



This otherwise healthy 8 year old boy was referred with persistent swelling of his upper lip. The diagnosis was orofacial granulomatosis, a chronic non-caseating granulomatous inflammation that usually affects the upper lip. The natural history is of a fluctuating condition with some evidence of aggravation by food additives, and dietary exclusions (of sodium benzoate) may be tried as a treatment. Most importantly, this condition can be a presentation of Crohn's disease; initial investigations and regular follow-up should be arranged with this in mind.

**Katherine Catford** (katcatford@yahoo.co.uk), paediatric specialist registrar, **Vas Mahendrayogam**, foundation year 1, **Ramen Lakshman**, consultant paediatrician, West Suffolk Hospital, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 2QZ  
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Scientists have identified an anatomical link between moral disgust and the more primitive forms of disgust related to toxicity and disease. They looked for signs of similarity in the facial motor activity evoked by tasting something unpleasant, looking at something disgusting, and moral disgust (elicited by unfair treatment in an economic game). All three states evoked activation of the levator labii muscle region of the face, which is characteristic of an oral-nasal rejection response. It seems that when another person's bad behaviour leaves a “bad taste”, it literally elicits the same disgust response as a real bad taste (*Science* 2009;323:1222-6, doi:10.1126/science.1165565).

Why are modern scientists so “dull and lacking in scientific ambition”? The editor of *Medical Hypotheses*, Bruce Charlton, says its because

the science selection process “ruthlessly weeds out interesting and imaginative people” (2009;72:237-43, doi:10.1016/j.mehy.2008.11.020). At each stage, conscientious and agreeable people are chosen over smart and creative people. The current length of training and the reduction in independence of career scientists tends to deter vocationally “revolutionary” scientists in favour of industrious and socially adept individuals. But to avoid the selection of gifted charlatans and confidence tricksters, he says, something else is also needed—a devotion to the “transcendental value of Truth.”

If nicotine receptors in muscle were activated as powerfully as those in the brain, then smokers would experience intolerable muscle contractions. So how does nicotine discriminate between the different sites? Chemists have identified that an interaction that occurs in the brain, between the positive charge of nicotine and an aromatic amino acid on the brain receptor, doesn't happen in muscle. They think the difference lies in the binding pockets and allows nicotine to bind more tightly to neuronal receptors (*Nature* 2009; published online 1 March, doi:10.1038/nature07768).

Parvovirus may have a role in the pathogenesis of the fibromyalgia syndrome, or may act as an early triggering factor, according to a Turkish study in *Clinical Rheumatology* (2009;28:305-9, doi:10.1007/s10067-008-1044-4). The seroprevalence of parvovirus B19 was assessed in 75 patients with fibromyalgia syndrome and 75 healthy controls. The prevalence of IgM antibodies against B19 was similar in both groups, but there was a significant difference between the groups in the prevalence of anti-B19 IgG—indicating that previous infection rather than current infection may be relevant.

A multicentre double blind randomised controlled trial comparing standard and low dose transfusions of platelets to patients with thrombocytopenia had to be stopped prematurely because the low dose group had more substantial bleeding than the standard group. The authors say they are none the wiser about whether their observations are due to chance or represent a real difference, and that only another trial—presumably using different dosing strategies—will establish an answer (*Blood* 2009;113:1564-73 doi:10.1182/blood-2008-09-178236).

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