



Coronal computed tomography image through the face
Try the anatomy quiz in **ENDGAMES**, p 1169

Sham controlled randomised clinical trials of acupuncture in the context of stroke show no positive treatment effect. A meta-analysis of five rigorous trials that looked at function and activities of daily living after stroke reports no beneficial effects of acupuncture. The researchers identified more relevant trials than ever before and searches included studies from China, Japan, and Korea, where acupuncture is widely practised. The small number of studies eventually included prevented an assessment of publication bias (*Canadian Medical Association Journal* 2010;182:1723-9, doi:10.1503/cmaj.091113).

Visually standardised peak flow graphs shared between patients and their doctors improve asthma control in the cold and flu season, according to a cluster randomised trial. Patients in the intervention group required fewer rescue courses of oral steroids during the winter (9% v 23%, $P<0.001$) and spring (3% and 17% $P<0.001$) than those who received usual care. Intervention group patients also had fewer periods of worsening symptoms and fewer urgent care visits during the winter than controls (*Chest* 2010;138:1148-55, doi:10.1378/chest.09-2394).

Aggressive brain cancer cells can morph into blood vessel cells, which in turn help to keep tumours alive (*Nature* 2010; doi:10.1038/nature09624, doi:10.1038/nature09557). Researchers have shown that many of the endothelial cells lining the blood vessels that nourish glioblastoma tumours are genetically derived from the cancer itself, probably from glioblastoma stem-like cells. This suggests that some cancer stem cells may feed cancer growth both directly and indirectly by differentiating into cancer cells and blood vessel cells. Drugs that prevent the differentiation into blood vessel cells could help to block angiogenesis.

A television programme that promoted “faith healing” in South Africa has been scrutinised by the country’s advertising standards authority. The authority had received an official complaint by the Treatment Action Campaign because some of the people with HIV and AIDS depicted in the programme had subsequently become fatally ill, probably because they had believed themselves cured and had stopped taking conventional medication. The authority ruled that the programme was of a religious nature and could be screened, but the decision has been challenged on the basis of ethics and morality (*South African Medical Journal* 2010;100:630-2).



This 11 month old girl was referred urgently because her atopic eczema was not responding to treatment. Her topical therapy included Oilatum Plus, a moisturising bath additive. Her mother had used the advised quantity of the additive but had bathed the child in a sink with a small quantity of water, resulting in a high concentration. The child had severe irritant dermatitis in her flexures. This bath additive contains 6% benzalkonium chloride, an antiseptic that can induce severe irritant dermatitis if not diluted adequately. Education on topical therapy techniques in eczema management will reduce the frequency of such side effects.

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Parental consent obtained.

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Australia has an “emerging disease” usually seen in Asia—community acquired *Klebsiella pneumoniae* liver abscesses. A report in the *Medical Journal of Australia* (2010;193:543-5) describes four previously well Asian born patients who have presented across Australia with *Klebsiella* liver abscesses, having recently visited Asia. The clinical response to antibiotics and drainage is usually good, but vigilance is needed for metastatic complications such as endophthalmitis, lung abscesses, and meningitis.

Why do people from lower socioeconomic groups fare worse with colon cancer? A large Swedish population study in the *European Journal of Cancer* observed excess mortality, a lower proportion of “cures” and shorter survival times among the uncured, in patients from lower socioeconomic groups compared with the highest. The gaps didn’t reduce over time. The authors conclude that socioeconomic differences cannot be attributed solely to lead time bias, so questions remain (2010;46:2965-72, doi:10.1016/j.ejca.2010.05.028).

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) was founded on 10 June 1935, the sobriety date of Dr Bob Smith, one of its co-founders, 75 years ago. Dr Bob was Bill Wilson’s first success at “fixing drunks.” The trick, he found, was to acknowledge that he needed the alcoholic Dr Bob to help him stay dry, as much as Dr Bob needed

him—doing it alone didn’t work nearly as well (*American Journal of Public Health* 2010;100:2361-3, doi:10.2105/ajph.2010.199349).

Lifelong bilingualism is a form of “cognitive reserve.” A study of 102 bilingual patients and 109 monolingual patients with Alzheimer’s disease reports that bilingual patients had been diagnosed 4.3 years later and had reported the onset of symptoms 5.1 years later than the monolingual patients. The groups were equivalent on measures of cognitive and occupational level and immigration status had no effect. The monolingualists had actually received more formal education than bilinguists (*Neurology* 2010;75:1726-9, doi:10.1212/WNL.0b013e3181fc2a1c).

Children who receive bone marrow transplants for early blood cancers do best if the donor is a genetically matched sibling. According to a multinational study, such recipients have less transplant related mortality, less acute and chronic graft versus host disease, and better overall survival than those who received transplants from single HLA mismatched related donors and HLA matched unrelated donors. No significant differences were seen between the latter two groups. In future, allele level typing may identify better matches among mismatched related donors (*Blood* 2010;116:4007-15, doi:10.1182/blood-2010-01-261958).

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