



**A woman with sudden headache followed by collapse**  
**Try the picture quiz in this week's ENDGAMES, p 779**

Painkillers of all strengths, including prescription only drugs, can be bought online over the internet. In one survey, 76% of websites available to the UK population did not require the customer to possess a valid prescription, and 46% of them sold prescription only analgesics. These medicines are usually purchased at greater than *British National Formulary* prices, and in large quantities (*British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology* 2009;67:250-4, doi:10.1111/j.1365-2125.2008.03343.x).

A German case control study of 333 infants who died before age 6 months and 998 age matched controls found that both exclusive and partial breast feeding in the month before death reduced the risk of SIDS. The proposed biological mechanisms are plausible: breast feeding protects against infection, and some deaths from SIDS are thought to be caused by uncontrolled inflammatory reaction to infectious agents; and sleep studies show that breastfed infants are more easily roused than formula fed babies (*Pediatrics* 2009;123:e406-e410, doi:10.1542/peds.2008-2145).

Breathlessness in people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease can be reduced and exercise tolerance improved by getting them to breathe a mixture of oxygen and helium—helium hyperoxia. An investigation into whether this practice enhanced the benefits of a pulmonary rehabilitation programme showed that compared with breathing air, breathing helium hyperoxia during rehabilitation increased the intensity and duration of exercise training (*Chest* 2009;135:609-18, doi:10.1378/chest.08-1517).

A review of the 204 deaths caused by avalanches in Canada between 1984 and 2005 reports that 75% were caused by asphyxia and 24% by trauma. Nine per cent of those who were asphyxiated had also sustained trauma. Trauma was less common in victims using snow mobile vehicles than in those who were ice-climbers. Just under half of those who had died from trauma as the primary cause were also completely buried (*CMAJ* 2009;180:507-12, doi:10.1503/cmaj.081327).

Long term sickness absence and disability preventing work in middle age can be traced back to childhood temperament, according



A 76 year old man underwent colonoscopy for altered bowel habit. Ileo-colonoscopy was macroscopically and histologically normal. Twelve hours later he developed abdominal pain with guarding in the right upper quadrant. Chest and abdominal radiographs were unremarkable but a computed tomogram showed intussusception at the hepatic flexure. His symptoms resolved after 24 hours with conservative treatment. A repeat scan confirmed resolution of the intussusception seven days after the original procedure. Colonic intussusception is a rare but well recognised complication of a common investigation. Most cases settle without surgical intervention.

**Isabel Teo** (isabelteo@hotmail.com), senior house officer, Combined Assessment Unit, New Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh EH16 4SA, **Gwotzer Ho**, consultant gastroenterologist, Western General Hospital, Edinburgh EH4 2XU  
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to a Scottish study in the *British Journal of Psychiatry* (2009;194:220-3, doi:10.1192/bjp.bp.107.044271). In the Aberdeen Children of the 1950's study, teachers had completed a child behaviour scale for more than 12 000 children. The features associated with later work absence were having frequent aches and pains in childhood, seeming to be miserable, and often being absent from school for trivial reasons.

Stock market traders apparently regulate their emotional responses better because they are used to keeping market volatility in perspective, while the rest of us tend to fear potential loss more than we anticipate potential gain. A study showed that the increased physiological arousal and behavioural effects relating to this "loss aversion" were greatly ameliorated when people were advised to think more like traders. However, the decrease in loss aversion varied widely between individual study participants (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 2009; published online March 16, doi:10.1073/pnas.0806761106).

Delayed diagnosis of intra-abdominal pathologies can have dire consequences for patients in the intensive care unit who cannot safely be transferred to other departments for testing. A retrospective review of 32 such patients suggests that bedside diagnostic laparoscopy may be a safe

and accurate alternative. The procedure took 40 minutes on average, and was diagnostic for almost half the patients (*Critical Care* 2009;13:R25, doi:10.1186/cc7730).

A daily dose of 40 mg of generic simvastatin over five years reduces estimated costs of hospital admission for vascular events in the United States by 20% (95% confidence interval 15 to 24). Overall savings were significantly greater for people with a lower five year risk of vascular events and patients older than 70. The researchers say that generic prescribing seems cost effective for a much wider population in the United States than that advised by current guidance (*Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes* 2009;2:65-72, doi:10.1161/circoutcomes.108.808469).

Medical end-of-life decisions differ between the Dutch and French speakers of Belgium (*BMC Public Health* 2009;9:79, doi:10.1186/1471-2458-9-79). The legal and healthcare systems are the same throughout the country, but the communities differ in the type and prevalence of some end-of-life decisions, especially for deaths at home or in care homes. Decisions about non-treatment and explicit intent to shorten life were more common in the Dutch speaking than in the French speaking populations, but prevalence of euthanasia did not differ.

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