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Global recession will affect health, p 858



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The Spanish healthcare system is one of Europe's most efficient, but urgent reform is needed if it is to cope with changing demands and rising costs, argue Jose M Martin-Moreno and colleagues

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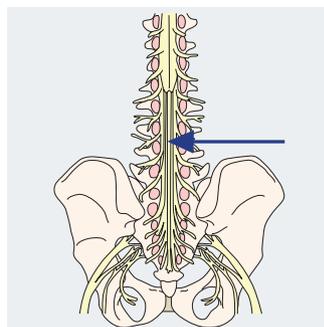




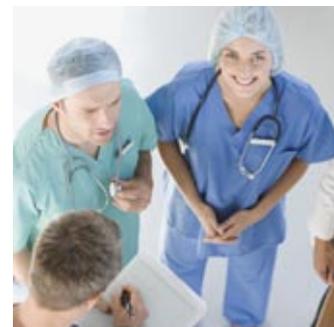
Nicotine replacement therapy, p 867



Hot tea and oesophageal cancer, p 876



Cauda equina syndrome, p 881



Safe practice for junior doctors, p 887

RESEARCH

- 867 Effectiveness and safety of nicotine replacement therapy assisted reduction to stop smoking: systematic review and meta-analysis**
In seven trials with smokers who weren't initially ready to stop regular behavioural support, monitoring, and replacement therapy doubled the rate of sustained abstinence, with a number needed to treat of 29
David Moore, Paul Aveyard, Martin Connock, Dechao Wang, Anne Fry-Smith, Pelham Barton
- 871 Neonatal vitamin A supplementation for prevention of mortality and morbidity in infancy: systematic review of randomised controlled trials**
There is no convincing trial evidence for initiating such supplementation for neonates in developing countries, even though vitamin A saves lives in older infants and children aged up to 4
Siddhartha Gogia, Harshpal Singh Sachdev
- 876 Tea drinking habits and oesophageal cancer in a high risk area in northern Iran: population based case-control study**
Drinking tea at temperatures greater than 70°C was associated with a greatly increased risk of oesophageal squamous cell carcinoma in Golestan province, where people have one of the highest incidence rates in the world but few of the other known risk factors
Farhad Islami, Akram Pourshams, Dariush Nasrollahzadeh, Farin Kamangar, Saman Fahimi, Ramin Shakeri, Behnoush Abedi-Ardekani, Shahin Merat, Homayoon Vahedi, Shahryar Semnani, Christian C Abnet, Paul Brennan, Henrik Møller, Farrokh Saidi, Sanford M Dawsey, Reza Malekzadeh, Paolo Boffetta
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>> Watch the video, www.youtube.com/BMJmedia

- 880 Effect of food intake during labour on obstetric outcome: randomised controlled trial**

pico

Women randomised to a light diet, eaten at will during labour, had similar lengths of labour and operative delivery rates to those advised to take water only

Geraldine O'Sullivan, Bing Liu, Darren Hart, Paul Seed, Andrew Shennan

>> Editorial, p 842

CLINICAL REVIEW

- 881 Cauda equina syndrome**
Chris Lavy, Andrew James, James Wilson-MacDonald, Jeremy Fairbank

PRACTICE

- 885 Rational testing: Investigating hypertension in a young person**
This article is the first in a series of occasional articles providing an update on the best use of key diagnostic tests in the initial investigation of common or important clinical presentations.
Fabian Hammer, Paul M Stewart
- 887 The competent novice: Practising safely in the foundation years**
This series aims to help junior doctors in their daily tasks and is based on selected topics from the UK core curriculum for foundation years 1 and 2, the first two years after graduation from medical school
Susannah Long, Graham Neale, Charles Vincent

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JOHN STONE PHOTOGRAPHY

PICTURE OF THE WEEK

The comedian, writer, and presenter Sandi Toksvig presents Frank Sullivan, from the Scottish School of Primary Care, Dundee, with the award for research paper of the year, at the inaugural BMJ Group awards. Work by Professor Sullivan and colleagues shows that early treatment with the corticosteroid prednisolone significantly improves chances of full recovery in Bell's palsy, superseding the use of the more expensive antiviral acyclovir. In the middle is one of the judges, Sally Davies, director of research and development at the Department of Health. See News, p 853.

THE WEEK IN NUMBERS

1-4 years Ages for which prophylactic vitamin A supplementation is considered effective for improving survival in poor countries (Research, p 871)

10% Hypertensive patients accounted for by primary hyperaldosteronism, the most prevalent form of secondary hypertension (Rational Testing, p 885)

80.4 years Life expectancy in Spain; the EU average before 2004 was 79.7 (Analysis, p 863)

10 Ways to cut NHS spending; from April 2011 spending will rise at just 1%, if at all (Observations, p 862)

16 English sites to pilot integration of health and social care (News, p 849)

**THE WEEK IN QUOTES**

“Women who were allowed to eat in labour had similar lengths of labour and operative delivery rates to those allowed water only” (Research, p 880)

“Cauda equina syndrome is a clinical area that attracts a high risk of litigation” (Clinical Review, p 881)

“Soon Vienna's artists extended their iconography of mental illness to include images of friends and patrons” (Review of the Week, p 894)

“Web based feedback from patients is coming” (Letter, p 848)

“Doctors will be disappointed at this [pay] award” (News, p 850)



EDITOR'S CHOICE

Measuring quality

The *BMJ* just got an unusual review. “Boy, is that a scary publication,” said Sandi Toksvig, “I read one article about the risks of oesophageal cancer from drinking tea in northern Iran. That’s very specific indeed. I’ve decided I’m not drinking tea there again.” Ms Toksvig, comedian, writer, and presenter, isn’t a regular *BMJ* reader but had mugged up before compering the first ever *BMJ* Group awards night, held in London last week. Ten awards were presented to celebrate excellence in medicine and health care, ranging from Research Paper of the Year to Lifetime Achievement award (p 853). Judith Longstaff Mackay, senior adviser to the World Lung Foundation, won the lifetime award for her many years of effective campaigning for tobacco control in Asia and beyond. Everyday work on the clinical front line was recognised too, with many of the awards going to NHS staff throughout the United Kingdom for practising good medicine, ensuring high quality care, and showing great leadership.

There’s a lot of good medicine in the *BMJ* this week. Although Sandi might be even more alarmed by the reminder that one in 10 acute admissions to hospital in the UK is accompanied by an adverse event, she could be reassured by the clear advice to junior doctors on how to minimise the effect on patients (p 887). When an adverse event occurs, the competent novice doesn’t panic: he or she protects the patient from further harm, tries to reverse any damage, calls for senior help, thinks about family and staff members’ needs, and—very importantly—explains and apologises to the patient as soon as possible.

And there’s the new Rational Testing series, on the best use of diagnostic tests in the initial workup of common or important clinical presentations. The *BMJ* has developed this series with two experts from Hull: Stephen Atkin, professor of academic endocrinology, and Eric Kilpatrick, honorary professor of biochemistry. This week Fabian Hammer and Paul M Stewart describe a young man who went to his general practitioner with a six month history of mild but progressive headache and was found to have a blood pressure of 178/108 mm Hg (p 885). He was otherwise well, but his hypertensive father had died from a stroke in his 40s. Which tests would you do?

This series complements our Rational Imaging series, which includes 24 articles so far. The most recent is Chirag Patel and colleagues’ article on what to do when neck imaging—in their case done to stage a bronchial tumour—incidentally reveals a thyroid nodule (*BMJ* 2009;338:b611). We would be pleased to consider contributions of up to 1000 words for both series. Each article needs a short case history, the practical details and pros and cons of two or three initial key tests or imaging techniques, and the case outcome (<http://resources.bmj.com/bmj/authors/types-of-article/practice>). And, when these articles are based on genuine cases, we will need the patient’s consent to publication using the *BMJ*’s form, which is now available in 14 languages (<http://group.bmj.com/products/journals/patient-consent-forms>).

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Clinical review, p 881

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WHAT'S NEW AT THE BMJ GROUP

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Preventing recurrent venous thromboembolism. The licensing of medicines in the UK, and Drospirenone in HRT? dtb.bmj.com

Case Reports—Read our Editor's Choice case report for FREE:

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New and updated reviews from *Clinical Evidence*

Recent updates to the website include anorexia nervosa, trigeminal neuralgia, and a new review on brain metastases clinicalevidence.bmj.com



PLUS

Career Focus, jobs, and courses appear after p 896.

WHAT'S NEW ON BMJ.COM

LATEST BLOGS

Eva Brencicova (pictured) was on a first date with her new boyfriend when a choking middle aged woman on an adjacent table threw up. She dreams of a world where it's hip to order lemonade instead of beer, and where lovers can focus on each other without having to worry about foolish women in drunken midlife crises staining her dress.

Alan Nye sweeps aside target fatigue and pats the NHS in England on the back for achieving its commitment to treat patients within 18 weeks of referral.

Juliet Walker analyses media coverage of the *BMJ*'s research paper about the link between hot tea and oesophageal cancer.



Julian Sheather wonders where the boundary between private life and public interest lies by examining supermodel Naomi Campbell's legal spat with UK tabloid *The Mirror* (pictured is Piers Morgan, former *Mirror* editor, after losing the case). And Richard Lehman's weekly look at research in the big four medical journals takes us from bed bugs via the Roman goddess of dawn - complete with Latin poetry - to Siberian bug bane.

You can read these and other blogs at <http://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/>

LATEST RESEARCH

Effectiveness and safety of nicotine replacement therapy assisted reduction to stop smoking

Nicotine replacement therapy is an effective intervention in achieving sustained smoking abstinence for smokers who have no intention or are unable to attempt to quit abruptly, according to this systematic review and meta-analysis.

Social deprivation and prognostic benefits of cardiac surgery

Smoking, extremes of BMI, and diabetes, which are potentially modifiable risk factors associated with social deprivation, are responsible for a significant reduction in survival after surgery, according to this observational study of 44 902 patients from five hospitals over 10 years.

Effect of high dose inhaled corticosteroids on wheeze in infants after respiratory syncytial virus infection

Early initiated high dose extra fine HFA beclometasone for infants during the first three months after hospital admission for respiratory syncytial virus infection has no major effect on recurrent wheeze, according to this randomised double blind placebo controlled trial.

Access this and other research papers at www.bmj.com/channels/research.dtl



MOST COMMENTED ON

Tea drinking habits and oesophageal cancer in a high risk area in northern Iran: population based case-control study

Diagnosis and treatment of primary hypothyroidism

Spontaneous preterm birth and small for gestational age infants in women who stop smoking early in pregnancy: prospective cohort study

What's your carbon reduction strategy?

The papal position on condoms and HIV



LATEST PODCASTS

In the wake of the G20 summit, *Financial Times* journalist Andrew Jack talks about new ways of funding health care during the global financial crisis. And Richard Lehman speaks about returning to *BMJ* blogs with his weekly journal watch, and *Easily Missed*, the new *BMJ* series he is involved with.

In last week's podcast, Professor Chris Ham, a health policy specialist from Birmingham University, spoke about UK government plans to open up the primary healthcare market. And GP and researcher Paul Aveyard outlined the findings of his study into nicotine replacement therapy.

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