



Petechial rash on the extremities
Try the picture quiz in **ENDGAMES, p 959**

Scratching an itch can be intensely satisfying, and the itchiness itself may bring about a specific state in the spinal cord that allows scratching to reduce the neuronal activity that transmits the sensation of itch up to the brain (*Nature Neuroscience* 2009; published online 6 April, doi:10.1038/nn.2292). The spinothalamic tract of the spinal cord is implicated, and research shows that the neurons of this tract are more active when itchy substances are applied to the skin. This latest work shows that scratching the skin blocks the activity of spinothalamic neurons at times of itchiness.

A new approach to screening for retinopathy of prematurity could do away with expensive and stressful eye examinations (*Pediatrics* 2009;123:e638-e645 doi:10.1542/peds.2008-2697). A combination of weight, insulin-like growth factor, and the use of an algorithm for neonatal retinopathy of prematurity correctly identified all babies who developed retinopathy of prematurity needing treatment, and most of those who did not need treatment. The alarm is triggered when the rate of weight gain drops to a certain level with serial weekly weights taken from birth to postmenstrual week 36.

Cognitive behavioural therapy works for some problems, but does its success depend on the competence of the therapist delivering it? And do trainees who are exposed to similar training in psychological therapy achieve the same standard of competence regardless of professional background? There are lots of questions and few answers. But one thing is clear: psychological treatments are more complex interventions than taking pills, and there is no uniform standard “dose” of the “right model” for a specific length of time (*Psychiatric Bulletin* 2009;33:121-3 doi:10.1192/pb.bp.108.020214).

A Mexican paediatrician has suggested a solution to the challenge of how to distract the immune system enough to stop it rejecting transplanted organs (*Medical Hypotheses* 2009;72:616-7, doi:10.1016/j.mehy.2008.12.011). His idea is to stimulate the immune response before the transplant. This could be achieved, he suggests, by administering a bacterial based vaccine. The best time to transplant would be, he thinks, just as the immunological memory to the vaccine is being created, when immunoglobulins M and G to the bacteria, and other cytokines, are



A 35 year old man was referred with multiple perianal boils, which had not responded to antibiotics and repeated incision and drainage. Examination revealed a fistula-in-ano with multiple external openings. Digital rectal examination and anoscopy showed a single midline internal opening. Histopathological examination of one of the tracts confirmed the clinical suspicion of tuberculosis, and the patient responded well to treatment. A fistula-in-ano with multiple openings is typical of anorectal tuberculosis.

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released, distracting the immune system from rejecting the new organ.

The warfarin and antiplatelet therapy in chronic heart failure randomised trial (WATCH) reports that the primary outcome of time to death, or first occurrence of non-fatal myocardial infarction or stroke, does not support the hypothesis that warfarin or clopidogrel are better than aspirin (*Circulation* 2009;119:1616-24, doi:10.1161/circulationaha.108.801753). For patients in sinus rhythm with reduced ejection fractions, however, hospitalisation for worsening heart failure occurred in 22.2% of those taking aspirin, 18.5% of those taking clopidogrel, and 16.5% taking

warfarin. Warfarin was also associated with fewer non-fatal strokes than aspirin or clopidogrel.

Jim Gee, the recent head of the United Kingdom's NHS Counter Fraud Service, says that the argument for fighting fraud in health systems “has never been stronger” (*Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 2009;87:254-5, doi:10.2471/BLT.09.040409). Asked why it took so long to take action against health sector fraud in the UK, he says fraud “doesn't align itself very easily with the ethical professional approach of people delivering health care.” They overcame this by establishing a new profession of counter fraud specialist with the emphasis on mobilising the honest majority while deterring the dishonest minority.

What's the relation between migraine and suicidal ideation in teenagers? According to a Taiwanese study of almost 4000 teenagers, suicidal ideation was associated with an increased frequency of headaches and with headache related disability. But after controlling for depression and sociodemographic factors, the relationship remained intact only for migraine with aura, and headaches that lasted for more than seven days a month (*Neurology* 2009;72:1146-52, doi:10.1212/01.wnl.0000345362.91734.b3).

The first generation of hip replacements made of highly cross-linked polyethylene have been tested against conventional polyethylene in a five year randomised controlled trial, with 50 patients in each group. The expectation was that the new material would wear better, and this appears to be the case. Five years after the operation, the rate of femoral head penetration with the new polyethylene liner was significantly lower than that seen with a conventional liner (*Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery* 2009;91:773-82, doi:10.2106/JBJS.H.00244).

One of the worst things for an HIV positive mother in South Africa is the wait before finding out whether her baby is also HIV positive. This time of “active mental preparation” is “emotionally stressful.” Most women were formula feeding their babies, but regretted not being able to breastfeed. Although most of the women interviewed hadn't planned to get pregnant, and many didn't want any more children, few had made plans to prevent any further pregnancies (*AIDS Care* 2009;21:329-34, doi:10.1080/09540120802183503).

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