Maternal obesity at antenatal booking is associated with an increased risk of prolonged pregnancy and induction of labour. A retrospective cohort study of nearly 30 000 singleton pregnancies reported that despite these risks, 60% of primiparous and 90% of multiparous obese women who were induced for prolonged pregnancy achieved vaginal deliveries, and had just as many complications in labour as those of normal weight women in similar circumstances. The authors conclude that induction of labour for prolonged pregnancy is a reasonable and safe option for overweight women (British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology 2011, doi:10.1111/j.1471-0528.2010.02889.x).

Cardiologists have found that two main mechanisms underlie the restenosis that occurs after drug eluting stents are implanted. Use of intravascular ultrasound showed that substantial underexpansion associated with longer stent length is one preventable mechanism. But in most cases intimal hyperplasia was the dominant mechanism, whether or not stent underexpansion is present, and in some cases underexpansion is present without restenosis (Circulation Cardiovascular Interventions 2011, doi:10.1161/circinterventions.110.940320).

One might suppose that squeezing a pimple is a fairly innocuous matter, but not so in the case of a 63 year old man who squeezed one on his neck. He rapidly developed right hand weakness, and a cranial magnetic resonance scan displayed ischaemic areas around the left anterior circulation. Further imaging showed a non-stenosing plaque in the left internal carotid artery very close to the site of manipulation. The neurologist surmises that in squeezing the pimple, the patient had inadvertently transformed a vulnerable plaque into a ruptured plaque that bled, releasing emboli into his brain (Neurology 2011;76:305, doi:10.1212/WNL.0b013e3182074be8).

Platelet rich plasma stimulates tendon repair in animal studies, and preliminary results from a human case series were promising: participants seemed to be able to return to sports faster. But evidence from a randomised controlled trial of autologous platelet rich plasma in acute Achilles tendon ruptures is less encouraging (American Journal of Sports Medicine 2011;39:38-47, doi:10.1177/0363546510383519). The mechanical outcome measures varied between patients, and could not be attributed to measuring errors. In fact, the Achilles Tendon Total Rupture score was lower in people injected with platelet rich plasma than in those who were not, suggesting a detrimental effect.

The Medical Protection Society describes the poor medical practice that led to the death of a young asthmatic man (MPS Update 2011, www.medicalprotection.org). It seemed that his inhaler technique and peak flow had never been checked. When he became wheezy and his inhaler did not help, he telephoned his general practitioner. The doctor left prescriptions for antibiotics and oral steroids but did not ask him if he had used his inhaler. He rapidly developed right hand weakness and was unresponsive when found by his neighbour. The doctor attempted resuscitation because he felt that his skills were inadequate.