



A 66 year old female with a three week history of lethargy and malaise
Try the picture quiz in
ENDGAMES, p 1395

A US clinical trial in virologically stable HIV positive patients on combination retroviral therapy (ART) has tested a simplified treatment regimen comprising a once daily single pill of efavirenz, tenofovir disoproxil fumarate, and emtricitabine. Just as many patients who switched to the simplified treatment maintained viral suppression as those who continued on ART, indicating that the simplified regimen is not inferior to continued treatment with ART (*Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes* 2009;51:163-74, doi:10.1097/QAI.0b013e3181a572cf). Those patients who switched to the simplified regimen preferred the single pill, reporting enhanced quality of life. The authors caution that anyone who switches should be watched carefully for evidence of virological rebound.

Small bowel contractility is thought to be more prominent in obese people, enhancing both nutrient absorption and hunger stimulation. An in vitro study looking for objective evidence in small bowel samples from obese and non-obese patients found that human small bowel contractility was increased in tissue from obese patients (*Annals of Surgical Innovation and Research* 2009;3:4, doi:10.1186/1750-1164-3-4). This finding suggests that obese people have faster gut emptying and more rapid intestinal transit, which in turn could lead to greater appetite and reduced satiety.

Existing prospective research on whether antihypertensive drugs offer protection against the risk of dementia offers a mixed picture. A 3 year cohort study of more than 6000 adults with a mean age of 68 reports that antihypertensive use was associated with a reduced risk of all dementia, with an 8% risk reduction per year of use in adults under the age of 75 years (*Neurology* 2009;72:1727-34, doi:10.1212/01.wnl.0000345062.86148.3f). This value dropped to 4% for people over the age of 75. No differences were observed between different classes of antihypertensive drugs.

Who predicts preoperative anxiety in children more accurately—parents or anaesthetists? Kain and colleagues looked at the anxiety predictions of mothers, attending anaesthetists, and resident anaesthetists for 125 children aged 2-16 years undergoing general anaesthesia. The predictions of junior anaesthetists and



A 16 year old woman presented to the dermatology department with an itchy and scaly annular rash on her palms that had not responded to topical steroids, oral flucloxacillin, and terbinafine. A similar rash had recently started to develop on the soles of her feet, but all other skin areas were clear. Serology indicated active *Treponema pallidum* infection, confirming secondary syphilis. Her symptoms and signs resolved after a course of intramuscular penicillin. This case represents an unusually florid cutaneous presentation of syphilis. There has been a significant re-emergence of syphilis in recent years; one should, therefore, have a high index of suspicion, especially in any patients presenting with cutaneous eruptions involving the palms and soles.

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 Patient consent obtained.

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parents did not correlate well with actual anxiety during induction of anaesthesia, but there were significant associations between the predictions of consultant anaesthetists and children's anxiety (*Anesthesia & Analgesia* 2009;108:1777-82, doi:10.1213/ane.0b013e31819e74de). Whether the predictions of the consultants would be just as accurate if they were not involved mostly with paediatric cases is not clear.

Does laughter influence arterial stiffness? A randomised, single blind, crossover study assessed 18 healthy individuals on three separate occasions: when watching a 30 minute segment of a film to induce laughter; when watching a 30 minute segment of a film to induce stress; and for a 30 minute period when no film was screened. The researchers found that laughter decreased pulse wave velocity—an index of arterial stiffness—whereas stress increased pulse wave velocity (*Psychosomatic Medicine* 2009;71:446-53, doi:10.1097/psy.0b013e318198dcd4). Laughter also reduced cortisol levels and increased total oxidative status.

Bacterial vaginosis is highly prevalent and is associated with adverse outcomes in pregnancy. A study that examined the potential link between

vitamin D status in pregnancy and bacterial vaginosis in early pregnancy found that the prevalence of bacterial vaginosis declined as levels of circulating vitamin D rose, and then hit a plateau as levels of vitamin D reached 80 nmol/l (*Journal of Nutrition* 2009;139:1157-61, doi:10.3945/jn.108.103168). The authors conclude that vitamin D deficiency is associated with bacterial vaginosis, possibly via its influence on the immune system. This finding might help explain the high prevalence of bacterial vaginosis in black women, who are far more likely to be deficient in vitamin D than are white women.

Watch out if you're intending to fly to the US this summer. A patient who had been receiving capecitabine, an antimetabolite drug, to prevent recurrence of his nasopharyngeal cancer was detained by immigration officials because his fingerprints had mysteriously disappeared (*Annals of Oncology* published online 26 May 2009, doi:10.1093/annonc/mdp278). The drug can cause chronic inflammation of the palms or soles that can over time eradicate finger prints. Oncologists are warning patients to carry a letter with them when they travel that explains they are not a security risk.

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