



A 2 year old girl with fever, cough, and tachypnoea
Try the picture quiz in ENDGAMES, p 1451

A 71 year old African-American woman has shown that it's never too late to start exercising. With a 10 year history of type 2 diabetes, her previous history included stroke, valve prolapse, and hip replacement. A supervised 12 week training programme of aerobic exercise involving three 30 minute episodes of exercise a week resulted in a reduction of five risk factors for cardiorespiratory disease: body fat, fasting glucose, low density lipoprotein cholesterol, systolic blood pressure, and sedentary lifestyle. Her serum C-reactive protein and HbA_{1c} levels also fell (*Clinical Diabetes* 2009;27:88-90, doi:10.2337/diaclin.27.2.88).

Thyroid dysfunction is common in older people, and free triiodothyronine in particular seems to be a useful indication of prognosis in hospitalised older patients. Three quarters of patients admitted to a geriatric unit showed alterations in thyroid function tests, and serum free triiodothyronine concentrations proved a powerful predictor for death during the hospital admission—they were significantly and negatively related to mortality (*Clinical Endocrinology* 2009;70:961-7, doi:10.1111/j.1365-2265.2008.03421.x).

Challenging patients sometimes reveal more about us than about them. Medical schools are good at teaching students how to deal with the patient with diabetes, but not necessarily how to deal with the difficult patient with diabetes. Underlying personality challenges can sometimes put the patient at risk, regardless of whether negative feelings are triggered by factors in the patient or factors in the doctor. It is critical to remember that difficult patients are often suffering and in distress (*Casebook* May 2009;12-14, www.mps.org.uk).

Curry fans may benefit from the turmeric that curries contain. At the Royal College of Psychiatrists' annual meeting in Liverpool last week, the director of the Mental Fitness Laboratory at Duke University Medical Center told delegates there is solid evidence from basic animal research that curcumin, a component of turmeric, binds to and dissolves amyloid plaques. A study is now underway in California to test curcumin's effects in people with Alzheimer's disease, specifically looking at their amyloid plaque proteins (www.rcpsych.ac.uk).

As a treatment for atrial fibrillation, radiofrequency catheter ablation has evolved from being thought of as an experimental procedure to being up there with anti-arrhythmic drugs. Indeed, two systematic



reviews suggest that this treatment works better than drugs, with fewer complications. Compared with patients in drug trials, those enrolled in studies of radiofrequency catheter ablation were younger, had had atrial fibrillation for longer, and had had a greater number of unsuccessful previous drug treatments (*Circulation: Arrhythmia and Electrophysiology* 2009; published online June 2, doi:10.1161/circep.108.824789).

Exposure to physical and sexual violence is common among children in some African countries and is associated with various negative health behaviours. In the five countries studied—Namibia, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe—between 27% and 50% of children reported witnessing physical violence in the year before the survey, and lifetime exposure to sexual violence was reported by 9-33%. Smoking and drinking, drug use, multiple sexual partners, sexually transmitted infections, suicidal ideation, and mental health issues were all associated with exposure to violence (*Bulletin of the World Health Organisation* 2009;87:447-55, doi:10.2471/BLT.07.047423).

Zebrafish have helpfully demonstrated that it's hydrogen peroxide that guides infection-fighting white cells towards new wounds (*Nature* 2009; published online June 3, doi:10.1038/nature08119). Within minutes of wounding, scientists found a decreasing concentration

A 40 year old man presented with a six week history of a mildly painful enlarging ulcer on his left lower leg that started after a trip to Afghanistan. He subsequently developed proximal erythematous nodules indicating sporotrichoid spread. Skin biopsy showed granulomatous inflammation with negative organism specific stains. Cutaneous leishmaniasis due to *Leishmania major* was confirmed on tissue polymerase chain reaction. He was treated with intravenous sodium stibogluconate for 20 days. Cutaneous leishmaniasis is now seen frequently in the UK, particularly in returning military personnel.

Sharmila Madhogaria, specialty registrar, Alena Salim, consultant, Department of dermatology, Heart of England NHS Foundation Trust, Solihull Hospital, Solihull B91 2JL

Patient consent obtained.

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gradient of hydrogen peroxide between the outer cell layer and the inner blood vessels of the organ involved. The gradient is created by the enzyme dual oxidase, and under its influence, white blood cells rapidly migrate to the wound.

Exposure to famine during gestation—endured by many in the Dutch Hunger Winter from 1944 to 1945—seems to have had more of an effect on the female than on the male offspring of hungry women. At age 58, women who had been prenatally exposed to famine had a lipid pattern characterised by raised total cholesterol and triglycerides, a pattern not seen in the men. Whether these women are at increased risk of cardiovascular disease is the subject of further studies (*American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 2009;89:1737-43, www.ajcn.org).

A complex series of tests of arterial stiffness in 10 healthy nulliparous women with regular periods indicates that systemic arterial stiffness undergoes huge changes during the menstrual cycle. Further tests in 22 women during a first pregnancy and in 15 pregnant women with pre-eclampsia indicate that pre-eclampsia is associated with greater and more prolonged increases in arterial stiffness. These changes may contribute to adverse cardiovascular outcomes of pregnancy and pre-eclampsia (*Hypertension* 2009;53:952-8, doi:10.1161/hypertensionaha.109.130898).

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