

## EDITORIALS

- 1385 In praise of the physical examination
- 1386 *Secret remedies*: 100 years on
- 1387 World hunger: a reasonable proposal
- 1388 Where have all the hospital flowers gone?

## YEARS LIKE THIS

- 1390 A journal of the plague year
- 1392 Sod's law applied to medicine
- 1394 Patent medicines and secret remedies
- 1396 I should cocoa
- 1397 The Spanish flu through the *BMJ*'s eyes
- 1399 *BMJ* archive: the videos
- 1400 Ingested foreign bodies and societal wealth: study of swallowed coins

## DIAGNOSIS

- 1402 Fatal alchemy
- 1404 Lead poisoning at the Swedish House
- 1406 Stigma and prejudice in Tintin
- 1408 Animated ophthalmology
- 1410 Lying obliquely—a sign of cognitive impairment
- 1413 Darwin's illness revisited
- 1416 House calls
- 1417 George Clooney, the cauliflower, the cardiologist, and phi, the golden ratio

## ANAESTHESIA

- 1418 Painless amputation
- 1420 Autoappendectomy in the Antarctic
- 1422 Prescriber's narcophobia syndrome

## CHRISTMAS FAYRE

- 1423 Christmas quiz
- 1424 Santa Claus: a public health pariah?
- 1426 Ethical dilemma

## MUSICAL INTERLUDE

- 1427 Django's hand
- 1429 Listening to *Nellie the Elephant* during CPR training in lay people

## YOUNG AND OLD

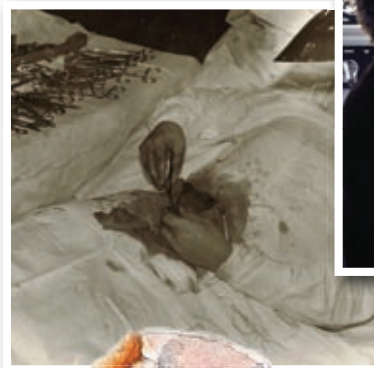
- 1432 Association of early IQ and education with mortality: 65 year longitudinal study
- 1433 Perceived age as clinically useful biomarker of ageing
- 1435 Attitudes to ageing in the *Economist*: apocalyptic demography for opinion formers?

## AFTERLIFE

- 1438 Silent virtuous teachers
- 1440 From flower graves to breast clinics

## PROFESSIONAL MATTERS

- 1441 Brain maps
- 1442 Wards of the roses
- 1444 Selling patients
- 1447 H-index pathology
- 1448 Christmas quiz: answers
- 1449 Evidence based merriment
- 1450 The Surgical Sieve



# Thinking caps on for the archive issue



ROB WHITE

When I was a medical student a helpful anaesthetist explained that surgeons wore caps in theatre to stop the bright lights from transilluminating their skulls. Now an anaesthetist has lifted the lid and discovered that surgeons have brains very similar to those of higher primates, with surprisingly complex wiring. Apparently, anaesthetists' brains differ markedly from surgeons' (p 1441). Who would have thought?

While this is brand new research, readers will discover many articles in this issue with a historical theme—intentionally chosen to mark the year that our complete archive (1840-

2009) was made available online. We've included a short description of the nine videos we commissioned to bring to life some of the important figures from the archive (p 1399). They're viewable free at [bmj.com/videos](http://bmj.com/videos). And we publish the winners of our £1000 prize for the most interesting use of the archive. Tom Jefferson and Eliana Ferroni reviewed what the *BMJ* published on the Spanish flu 1918-1924, unearthing observations that may have lessons for today (p 1397).

A quick glance at our editorials might suggest that this fixation on the past includes an unhealthy dollop of nostalgia—for a time when junior doctors could recognise whispering pectoriloquy (p 1385) and Nurse would gladly stick a bunch of flowers in a vase (p 1388). But David Colquhoun uses the centenary of the publication of *Secret Remedies* (p 1394) to urge us to look hard at the efficacy of medicines, now (p 1386). His editorial is timely, given that too many at the top of British medicine

seem frozen in the headlights of the complementary medicine bandwagon. He describes a recent session of the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, devoted to homoeopathy, as "pure comedy gold."

We usually reject articles suggesting diagnoses for the illustrious dead because the hypotheses are untestable, and armchair diagnosticians usually come up with some equally plausible alternative within a year or two. But we've made an exception for Charles Darwin in his anniversary year (p 1413). John Hayman's hypothesis that he had a mitochondrial disorder could be tested by checking descendants of his female relatives for the suspected genetic abnormality. We've included articles about possible causes of death of Diane de Poitiers (p 1402) and 17 Norwegian sealers (p 1404) but in these cases there was some tissue to analyse. Both have accompanying videos on [bmj.com/videos](http://bmj.com/videos).

For one year only, we've suspended our prohibition against publishing spoofs in the Christmas *BMJ*. I'm not revealing which article it is, but I can tell you that not all *BMJ* editors and outside reviewers spotted it. And for those of you who would like to stretch themselves mentally after a heavy Christmas meal, we have a short pathology quiz (p 1423).

Tony Delamothe, deputy editor, *BMJ*  
[t.delamothe@bmj.com](mailto:t.delamothe@bmj.com)

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2009;339:b5471



GRAHAM BIGNELL & RICHARD ARDAGH  
 NEW NORTH PRESS/02077293161

Articles appearing in this print journal have already been published on [bmj.com](http://bmj.com), and the version in print may have been shortened.

## Meet the experts.

**BMJ** Masterclasses

[masterclasses.bmj.com](http://masterclasses.bmj.com)

