

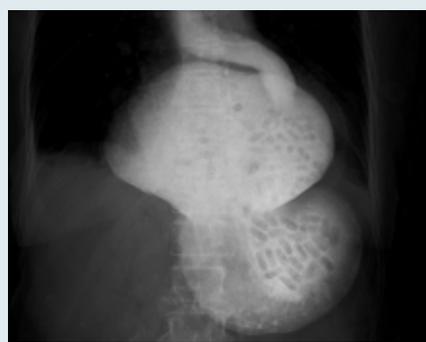
A 24 year old man in A&E with suicidal thoughts Try the case report questions in **ENDGAMES, p 485**

The social behaviour of 13 patients with highly functioning autism improved after they inhaled oxytocin (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 2010; published 16 February, doi:10.1073/pnas.0910249107). In a virtual ball passing game, the intervention group processed social cues better than the control group. A second test involved attentiveness to important visual cues when viewing pictures of human faces, and again the intervention group performed better than controls. Despite individual variation in social responses, the authors say the treatment effect was significant enough to merit further investigation of long term oxytocin.

Children aged 8 who are mixed handed have a twofold increase in the odds of having difficulties with language and school performance, compared with right handed children. Eight years later, these 16 year olds continued to have more language and school problems, often displayed the inattention symptoms of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, and had symptom scores indicating probable psychiatric disturbances. The authors suggest that early identification of mixed handed children could enable better recognition of problems (*Pediatrics* 2010;125:e340-8, doi:10.1542/peds.2009-1165).

Daily oral medication for some people with schizophrenia could become a thing of the past, according to a study in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* (2010;167:181-9, doi:10.1176/appi.ajp.2009.07081221). Long acting injections of olanzapine, a drug commonly used to maintain the stability of people with psychotic conditions, were as efficacious as oral olanzapine in maintenance treatment of schizophrenia for up to 24 weeks. The safety profile of the injections was similar to that of the oral preparation, except for the occurrence of a few injection related adverse events.

Patients who become critically ill and survive the intensive care unit (ICU) should be regarded as having a life time diagnosis, with an associated excess of mortality and morbidity, and a requirement for ongoing healthcare support. This is the conclusion of a cohort study that tracked the quality of life of patients for five years after their ICU experience. ICU admission was associated with a poor physical quality of life and a low quality adjusted life years gained, compared with the general population for five years after discharge (*Critical Care* 2010;14:R6, doi:10.1186/cc8848).



An 87 year old woman with a known hiatus hernia was admitted after several weeks of intractable vomiting. A barium swallow showed a large, partly volvulated hiatus hernia with almost complete pyloric obstruction. In the stomach, more than 50 oval shaped filling defects were seen—these were undigested oral drugs, probably omeprazole and mesalazine. Pyloric obstruction can occur as a result of hiatus hernia, especially if the pylorus lies above the hiatus, and any undigested medication must be removed when relieving the obstruction to prevent overdose.

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Patient consent obtained.
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Adolescent fatherhood is “catching”—or at least there seems to be an intergenerational cycle of adolescent fatherhood. Data from nearly 1500 young men who were interviewed annually for the US National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 show that sons of adolescent fathers were 1.8 times more likely to become adolescent fathers themselves than were sons of older fathers. Other factors that independently predicted adolescent fatherhood were delinquency, maternal education, and early adolescent dating. The authors recommend that intervention programmes tackle all these elements of risk (*American Journal of Public Health* 2010;100:517-24, doi:10.2105/AJPH.2009.177600).

The 2007 American Heart Association guidelines for prevention of cardiovascular disease in women drew heavily on randomised controlled trials. An analysis of these trials reports that enrolment of women has improved over time, but

remains low relative to their representation in disease populations. Representation of women was highest in trials of hypertension (44%), diabetes (40%), and stroke (38%) and lowest for trials of heart failure (29%), coronary artery disease (25%), and hyperlipidaemia (28%). In the real world, women account for 53% of people with hypertension, 50% with diabetes, 51% with heart failure, 49% with hyperlipidaemia, and 46% with coronary artery disease (*Circulation Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes* (2010; published online 16 February, doi:10.1161/circoutcomes.110.868307).

Acupuncture came out better than drugs or herbal remedies in the treatment of painful periods in a systematic review. But the results are limited, say the authors, by methodological flaws in the 27 individual randomised controlled studies included. What's more, the evidence for the effectiveness of acupuncture for primary dysmenorrhoea is no more convincing than sham acupuncture (*BJOG* 2010; published online 17 February, doi:10.1111/j.1471-0528.2010.02489.x).

Mirror therapy before amputation may prevent the development of phantom limb pain (*Anesthesia and Analgesia* 2010;110:611-4, doi:10.1213/ANE.0b013e3181b845b0). Four patients received 14 daily sessions, in which mirror images of the healthy limb were used to “teach” the brain not to feel pain in the other limb, before amputation. One patient experienced no phantom pain at all, two reported rare episodes of mild phantom pain, and the fourth reported daily moderate episodes of pain that did not affect his quality of life. The authors say this is enough evidence to warrant larger studies of mirror therapy, alongside functional magnetic resonance brain imaging, to see what exactly is going on.

A GP who is researching “finding best practice and finding the best ways of spreading best practice” needs some assistance. Aware that “not enough time” is the commonest complaint in most British GPs’ appraisals, he’s developed a quick fire set of questions that he hopes will identify ways to be more effective and efficient using the available time. If you can spare any time go to www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=S1a5cMZu5mQmlqYCXBy4ng_3d_3d. Alternatively, you could just email him with your comments or ideas at tk@elpmek.demon.co.uk.

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