

MINERVA



An 83 year old man with an exophytic and ulcerated nasolabial skin lesion.
Try the picture quiz in **ENDGAMES, p 767**

A unique collaboration known as EAGLE (Early Genetics and Lifecourse Epidemiology)—a consortium of 20 different large scale birth and paediatric cohorts with genetic data relating to phenotyping and genome wide screening—offers the opportunity for identifying genetic loci associated with several health outcomes from early fetal life to young adulthood. The collaborators are seeking to increase the power of the project by inviting others to join them in the venture. The database is updated regularly at <http://wiki.genepi.org.au/display/EAGLE/EAGLE>.

The risk of uterine rupture after previous caesarean section is difficult to quantify but a Norwegian study found that compared with elective prelabour caesarean section, the odds of rupture increased for emergency prelabour caesarean section, spontaneous labour, and induced labour. The odds were also increased for women older than 40 years (v under 30), non-Western women, and gestational age over 41 weeks (v 37-40 weeks). Trial of labour carried greater risk and worse outcome of rupture than elective repeated caesarean section, although absolute risks were low (*BJOG* 2010; doi:10.1111/j.1471-0528.2010.02533.x)

A therapeutic pathway currently being explored for Alzheimer's disease may actually make things worse (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 2010; published online 22 March, doi:10.1073/pnas.0914251107). A group of peptide fragments that were conventionally thought of as safe for Alzheimer's treatments have now been shown to disrupt brain cell projections (neurites) and could kill human cortical neurons. Researchers used simulations and atomic force microscopy to establish that the short peptides produce stable channels wide enough to transport calcium ions, which in turn could kill off nerve cells.

More than 2000 doctors have migrated to Australia from South Africa since 1948, and the motives for this migration were ascertained in 653 email contacts. The response rate was 72%, and 93% of respondents said their move had been prompted by a desire to leave South Africa rather than inducements from Australia. Before 1990 the desire to leave was mainly due to opposition to apartheid, and after 1990 the primary reason was violent crime in South Africa. Lifestyle was the main attraction of Australia (*Medical Journal of Australia* 2010;192:288-90).



This 91 year old woman, who was cognitively impaired, lived alone and did not turn the heating on at all for a few weeks before Christmas. She presented to our vascular service with irreversible ischaemia of all ten fingers and both feet. Initially she was thought to have frostbite but further investigations showed acute haemolytic anaemia (58 g/l haemoglobin), a high IgM cold agglutinin titre ($>1:100\,000$) at 4°C, and haemoglobinuria. Donath-Landsteiner screening and serology for mycoplasma, Epstein-Barr virus, and cytomegalovirus were negative. This acute limb-threatening presentation of chronic cold-agglutinin syndrome was precipitated by exposure to the extraordinary weather conditions. The patient survived and an application has been made for her to be transferred to a nursing home.

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Patient consent obtained.

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The miseries of book authors are plaintively described in the *Quarterly Journal of Medicine* (2010;103:281-2, doi:10.1093/qjmed/hcp090). This writer compares the entertainment of baiting authors with reviews to the tormenting and taunting of animals. There are two types of critics, he says; those who use a microscope (they harp on about faults barely visible to common observation and enjoy the use of sarcasm) and those who use a telescope (they see with clarity all the big ideas on either side of the written arguments and produce a long list of omissions, but refuse to read anything immediately before their eyes).

Colorectal cancer is the most common form of cancer in Taiwan and 5-fluorouracil is the drug most commonly used for chemotherapy, although patients are often resistant to treatment. Investigators in Taiwan studied a potential genetic marker of 5-fluorouracil resistance called rTS, and their results showed that the protein was expressed in 66.9% of pathology samples tested (*Annals of the Academy of Medicine, Singapore* 2010;39:107-11). Survival rates up to five years after treatment were significantly lower for patients with rTS expression than for those without ($p=0.0023$).

Something has gone wrong with our society; it has become angrier, less restrained, and less respectful, says a consultant nurse who witnessed the effect of verbal abuse on front line staff in hospitals (*British Journal of Nursing* 2010;19:345). Minerva couldn't agree more. She recently witnessed the aggression of a patient who, when not given an immediate appointment to see a doctor after being bitten by a rat, spat venomously at the poor receptionist: "It's your responsibility if I develop septicaemia." The receptionist's remarkably robust response after the event: "It was the rat I felt sorry for."

Young men who survive cancer reported a marked impairment in quality of life, energy levels, and quality of sexual functioning, which was worse in those with low testosterone levels. However, psychological distress was not elevated, self-esteem was normal, and sexual relationships were not impaired. The authors of a controlled cross-sectional study say the association between testosterone and these factors is complex and may involve a threshold level of testosterone rather than direct correlation. They suggest that an interventional trial is needed to determine whether testosterone replacement would improve quality of life (*Cancer* 2010;116:1592-601, doi:10.1002/cncr.24898).

We're always interested in publishing interesting quotations with a medical angle: we print them as Endnotes in the white space at the end of articles. We still get a few submitted, but many of them are familiar and we have printed them before. If you come across any new ones please do send them in (via <http://submit.bmj.com>).

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