



An 81 year old woman with a history of nausea but unable to vomit
Try the picture quiz in
ENDGAMES, p 1423

Music to Minerva's ears. In a study exploring the clinical neuroscience behind music processing, researchers set out to investigate associative knowledge of musical composition, musical emotion, musical instruments, and music notation. All eight of the participants—two of whom were clinically diagnosed with dementia—were music experts and underwent five experiments. The researchers concluded that music knowledge is in part dissociated from other neuropsychological functions but shares some features of cognitive organisation with other knowledge systems, and that general musical knowledge is relatively more robust than knowledge of a particular music (*Brain* 2010;133:1200-13, doi:10.1093/brain/awp345).

In Papau, Indonesia, a neonate had acquired high levels of the malarial parasite *Plasmodium falciparum* in the uterus and developed severe clinical symptoms. The baby presented with high levels of parasitaemia, gametocytaemia, and marked splenomegaly, indicating vertical transmission and replication of the parasite before birth. The mother did not have any history of fever; her peripheral blood examination on the day of delivery was negative and remained so 24 hours later. Placental infection was not determined (*American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* 2010;82:563-5, doi:10.4269/ajtmh.2010.09-0744).

"Feeling fat? Energy restrict!" A study used data collated from over 180 000 individuals in the world's largest ongoing health system survey by telephone, the Behavioural Risk factor Surveillance System. Participants were questioned about their diet strategies and changes in weight loss attempts. Between 1996 and 2003, rates of those using energy restriction diets doubled, and low fat dieting decreased by a third. As recommended, energy restriction diets accompanied by a healthy overall diet were more beneficial than macronutrient focused diets (*Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 2010;110:535-42 doi:10.1016/j.jada.2009.12.029).

A survey in the *Annals of Emergency Medicine* describes concerns about patient safety on behalf of 2507 emergency doctors (2010;55:336-40 doi:10.1016/j.annemergmed.2009.08.020). As expected, those working in urban and suburban areas considered inpatient crowding to be the greatest safety concern, whereas consultant availability was the main concern for rural



A 50 year old woman presented to the emergency department with a two day history of a widespread itchy rash associated with a slight fever, malaise, and vague abdominal pain. Examination revealed a streaky dermatitis especially over the trunk and arms. When questioned, she recalled eating shiitake mushrooms the day before the onset; some had been eaten raw. She was treated with chlorphenamine tablets and betamethasone valerate cream and the eruption resolved. The flagellate dermatitis caused by shiitake mushrooms is a very distinctive eruption. The mechanism is uncertain and may be toxic or allergic in nature. Cooking may denature the substance responsible.

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emergency doctors. Other worries that made the top ten for practices in all areas included prescription of aspirin and β blockers for myocardial infarction, nurse shortages, and lack of follow-up for emergency department care. National benchmarking programmes do not currently include all these factors.

Does smoking in pregnancy have any benefits? Although the combustion products of smoking (namely, carbon monoxide) may protect against pre-eclampsia, the constituents of tobacco (such as nicotine) seem not to. In a large study of more than 600 000 Swedish births, researchers found that those who smoked cigarettes during pregnancy had a decreased risk of developing pre-eclampsia and gestational hypertension, compared with non-tobacco users. By comparison users of smokeless tobacco products, such as snuff, had an increased risk of developing preterm pre-eclampsia (*Hypertension* 2010;55:1254-9, doi:10.1161/HYPERTENSIONAHA.109.147082).

A researcher has just had an academic paper rejected by the journal *PLoS ONE* and in the process believes he may have set a new publishing record.

According to their online manuscript submission system it took just 1 minute 52 seconds from editor assignment to rejection. The rejection letter included the phrase "having discussed the paper with our internal editors." Evidently the editor is a whiz at speed reading and has extremely short conversations with his colleagues (<http://dianthus.co.uk/a-new-record-in-biomedical-publishing>). The subject of the paper was whether professional medical writers improve the quality of biomedical publications.

With the dawning of the brand new National Health Service in the wake of the UK's new coalition government, the editor of the *Bulletin of the Royal College of Surgeons of England* has commissioned his "semi-geriatric reporter Mr Slop, FRCS (Eng) to reflect on surgery not as a political football but as a noble and unchanging art that even the politicians cannot dumb down" (2010;92:215, doi:10.1308/147363510X506801). His column makes a good read—the bottom line is that not much has really changed at the coalface.

Cellular ageing or senescence—when cells remain viable but lose the ability to divide—is thought to be a tumour suppressive mechanism. Research in *Nature Cell Biology* indicates that cell senescence makes a difference in areas other than cancer (2010; published online 6 June, doi:10.1038/ncb2070). Mediated by the protein CCN1, cellular senescence prevents the formation of excess tissue during wound healing. Studies in mice show that senescent cells appear in the granulation tissue, but if functional CCN1 is missing, fewer senescent cells appear and there is more fibrosis. In these studies senescence is an anti-fibrotic mechanism.

Bullying has achieved a modest level of worldwide public health attention—but not enough, according to the *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* (2010;88:403, doi:10.2471/BLT.10.077123). It's mostly found in schools and the workplace and a growing body of research shows substantial morbidities affecting the individuals involved, with health and safety hazards linked to bullying across the lifespan. Health policies for bullying prevention are needed, and they should be implemented in schools, where future employees and employers develop their physical, cognitive, social, moral, and ethical skills.

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