



A 62 year old man with black discoloured skin lesions on both legs
Try the picture quiz in ENDGAMES, p 207

Scientists have successfully taken apart a rat lung and rebuilt it with new cells. The new lung exchanged oxygen and carbon dioxide for a short time after being transplanted into a live rat. The technique involved removal of the spongy epithelial cells and blood vessels of the lungs with detergent, leaving a scaffold of connective tissue that retained the mechanical properties of the original lung. The scaffold was “marinated” in a mixture of lung epithelial and endothelial cells and within a few days the engineered lung contained alveoli, microvessels, and small airways that were repopulated with the appropriate cell types (*Scienceexpress* 2010; published online 24 June, doi:10.1126/science.1189345).

What impact do common skin conditions have on the British public? Studies presented to the *British Association of Dermatologists* conference in Manchester about acne, eczema, and psoriasis report that 90% of those afflicted say their skin has influenced a major life changing decision, and 20% say it affected their decision whether to have children. Just under half said their skin condition affected their choice of clothing, one in five said it affected whether they wore make up; the same proportion said their condition prevented them from socialising, and a third said they had stopped swimming (www.bad.org.uk).

When the media present medical controversies, are researchers being misquoted because of miscommunication, a misunderstanding, or an intentional effort to foster other agendas, such as political ones? Ten rules of engagement for “rookies” in the academic world when dealing with media are presented in the *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology* (2010;63:714-8, doi:10.1016/j.jclinepi.2010.02.002). The author adds a note: “I would suggest that a rookie is someone who is either so arrogant or so inexperienced that they think they are the smartest person in the room!”

A writer in *Cancer* says that use of the cancer antigen 125 blood test to monitor for recurrence of ovarian cancer is controversial (2010;116:2854-5, doi:10.1002/cncr.25185). A recent trial found no survival benefit from early treatment given on the basis of a raised serum marker alone, but the test is generally thought to be reliable when used in combination with other diagnostic tools. Although some patients may prefer to watch and wait, he thinks that



A 35 year old woman was referred to us by her optician with an incidental finding of bilateral scattered retinal hyperpigmentation. The ocular findings were normal except for lesions in line with bilateral multiple congenital hypertrophy of the retinal pigment epithelium. Her mother died of colon cancer in her late 30s. Any patient with an atypical presentation of this condition (bilateral or multiple) and a strong family history of colon disease should be referred for gastroenterology review and investigation for early detection and management of familial polyposis coli, which is universally complicated by colorectal carcinoma.

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Patient consent obtained.

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most survivors of the disease want to know their results periodically. He suggests that individual women should be asked about how they want to be followed up.

How do private patients in India with tuberculosis feel about the public directly observed treatment (DOTS) programme? Only 15% of 200 such patients interviewed were aware of the programme and once it was explained, 68% said they found it unacceptable. Over 90% of them said they would rather buy the drugs themselves than have to visit a DOTS centre, saying that such an approach was an intrusion of privacy. Better strategies are needed to ensure that higher cure rates are achieved without compromising patient choice, say the authors (*BMC Public Health* 2010;10:357, doi:10.1186/1471-2458-10-357).

Banning drug companies from giving away free lunches to doctors is having a severe impact on local catering businesses in Massachusetts, and restaurants want the ban lifted. As one journalist

commented, Massachusetts is seriously considering changing its laws to give companies more influence over doctors in order to satisfy local fast food franchises. In Los Angeles a company called Dr Lunch is devoted entirely to providing free drug company lunches for doctors, and the local medics sing its praises (<http://bit.ly/8YZ2wY>).

Staff at a secure forensic unit in Edinburgh use an “alcometer” when treating restricted patients or those in whom alcohol misuse is suspected. One breathalysed patient tested positive for alcohol but denied consuming any. Staff had used an alcohol based hand disinfectant lotion before doing the test, in line with local hygiene guidance. The hand rub contains 80% alcohol, making it highly likely that alcohol would get into the vapour in the immediate environment, so that anyone inhaling before the test would breathe in some of the vapour (*British Journal of Psychiatry* 2010;197:75-7, doi:10.1192/bjp.197.1.75).

The WOMAN (World Maternal Antifibrinolytic) trial is an international multicentre randomised controlled study of tranexamic acid for post-partum haemorrhage. Its coordinators at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine are putting the word out to doctors, midwives, and nurses everywhere in their effort to recruit 15 000 women. Their aim is to determine the effect of the early administration of tranexamic acid on death, hysterectomy, and other morbidities in women with post-partum haemorrhage. Go to www.thewomantrial.lshtm.ac.uk for more information.

A computer supported patient assessment tool could enhance cancer care, according to a randomised controlled trial. Before hospital visits, patients with leukaemia or lymphoma used a touchpad computer to report their problems and rank them according to their need for support. Summaries were then given to doctors and nurses to help them understand patients’ needs and provide individually targeted care. The tool significantly increased the number of problems addressed, reduced patients’ distress related to symptoms, and reduced their need for support in managing symptoms over time (*Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association* 2010;17:403-10, doi:10.1136/jamia.2010.005660).

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