

MINERVA

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A woman with raised alkaline phosphatase and forearm deformity
Try the picture quiz in **ENDGAMES**, p 1369

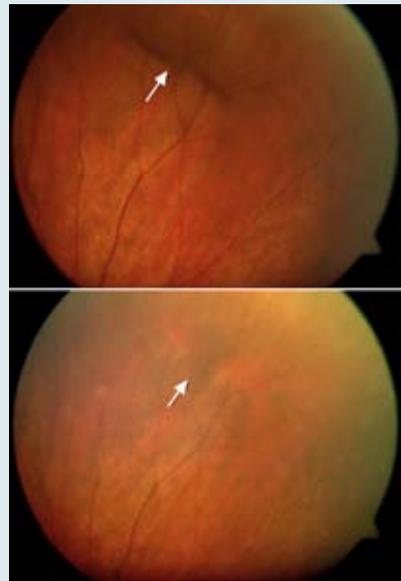
The addition of spironolactone to treatment in patients with resistant arterial hypertension is effective and tolerated well (*Hypertension* 2011;57:1069-75, doi:10.1161/hypertensionaha.111.169961). The ASPIRANT trial—a randomised, double blind, placebo-controlled trial—involved 117 patients who were already taking three antihypertensives, with a systolic blood pressure remaining above 140 mm Hg or diastolic pressure greater than 90 mm Hg. Adverse events were similar in both groups.

People who start using cannabis before the age of 15 show significantly poorer performance on tasks that assessed sustained attention, impulse control, and executive functioning, compared with a control group of non-users and especially with people who started using cannabis at an older age. The findings support the suggestion that early adolescence may be especially vulnerable to the neurocognitive effects of substance use (*British Journal of Psychiatry* 2011;198:442-7, doi:10.1192/bjp.bp.110.077479).

Eating baked and grilled fish may lower the risk of heart failure in post-menopausal women, while fried fish intake may increase it (*Circulation Heart Failure* 2011, doi:10.1161/circheartfailure.110.960450). Data from the Women's Health Initiative observational study showed that the cooking style is important, not just the basic ingredients. No links were found between intake of omega-3 fatty acids and incident heart failure.

While wishing for the best outcome for themselves and their babies, some women really don't agree with antiretroviral therapy to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV. The reasons they offer include protecting their children against a medical "fraternity" that seems to insist on such treatments without acknowledging the mothers' concerns about toxicity. The authors advice is to presume that a mother wants the best for her baby, and to try to understand a woman's explanation of what therapy means to her (*AIDS Care* 2011;23:578-84, doi:10.1080/09540121.2010.482124).

Could "maternal-fetal chronobiological dysfunction" account for the birth seasonality of schizophrenia (being born in the winter and spring increases the risk of developing the condition)? Reduced maternal exposure to sunlight during the second trimester may bring about a reduced amplitude in maternal circadian



A 41 year old woman was referred by her optometrist with a raised pigmented lesion at the superonasal aspect of the right retina. The patient was asymptomatic. The lesion was referred as a suspected melanoma. The patient was short sighted with no history of visual symptoms and no history of eye surgery or trauma. Dilated funduscopy showed a varicosity of one of the vortex veins (fig, top). The "raised pigmented lesion" disappeared when gentle pressure was applied to the globe (fig, bottom), confirming the diagnosis. Varicosity of the vortex veins should be considered in the differential diagnosis of raised peripheral retinal lesions.

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Patient consent obtained.

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pacemaker rhythm and reduced nocturnal levels of melatonin. Concentrations of melatonin in plasma are critical determinants of human dopaminergic programming, and reduced levels have a detrimental effect on immature hippocampal neurons in animals. The result could be increased phasic dopamine release—the characteristic biochemical flaw in schizophrenia (*Medical Hypotheses* 2011;76:785-93, doi:10.1016/j.mehy.2011.02.019).

Exacerbations of multiple sclerosis are known to be associated with stressful life events, but does stress actually increase the risk of the disease in the first place? A prospective study using data from the Nurses' Health Study found no increase in the risk of multiple sclerosis associated with severe stress at home. Neither was there a significantly increased risk of the condition among people who reported severe physical abuse, nor in those who had been forced into sexual activity during childhood or adolescence (*Neurology* 2011;76:1866-71, doi:10.1212/WNL.Ob013e31812d74c5).

A specific part of the brain is activated by nicotine, resulting in decreased appetite—explaining why smokers are on average thinner than non-smokers and why some smokers say they smoke as a method of weight control (*Science* 2011;332:1330-2, doi:10.1126/science.1201889). The neuronal circuits involved are part of the body's hypothalamic melanocortin system. Nicotine increases the activity of POMC neurons, known for

the effects on obesity in human and animals, and on a set of melanocortin 4 receptors. The discovery opens the possibility of developing nicotine based treatments to help people quit smoking and to control obesity and metabolic disorders.

Children who are admitted to hospital for non-inflicted abdominal trauma do better overall than those with abdominal trauma caused by abuse (*Pediatrics* 2011;127:e1400, doi:10.1542/peds.2010-2096). Those who were abused were younger and had longer and more expensive hospital stays. The children who were abused at age 1-9 years had a higher mortality rate than those whose abdominal trauma was non-inflicted, but there was no difference in mortality for children under a year in age.

Patellar tendinopathy is common among jumping athletes, especially those who play volleyball, basketball, or handball. A group of these athletes who had had tendinopathy for three to 12 months were randomised to receive extracorporeal shockwave therapy or placebo during the first half of the competitive season. Over time the only difference reported between the two groups was that, one week after the final treatment, significantly more athletes in the intervention group reported subjective improvement in pain. For all objective measures, the two groups were the same (*American Journal of Sports Medicine* 2011;39:1191-9, doi:10.1177/0363546510395492).

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