



**A 61 year old man with sudden onset breathlessness**  
**Try the picture quiz in**  
**ENDGAMES, p 375**

Patients with dysfunctional breathing—breathing problems not attributed to a medical diagnosis—improved dramatically after breathing retraining. This entailed teaching diaphragmatic breathing and explaining normal breathing patterns. At five year follow-up, patients reported fewer breathing difficulties during daily functioning and exercise. In addition, quality of life measures improved, and they attended emergency rooms less often. The only downside: the authors admit they can't be sure all these improvements could be put down to their original intervention (*Respiratory Medicine* 2011;105:1153-9, doi:10.1016/j.rmed.2011.03.006).

People who have tinnitus may or may not have hearing loss. An Indian team hypothesises that tinnitus without hearing loss may be caused by central and subcortical abnormalities, and altered outer hair cell function. The changes they observed in auditory brainstem and middle latency responses in patients with tinnitus and no hearing loss indicate central auditory alterations. As tinnitus involves both peripheral and central activity, the team says that complete audiological and neurophysiological investigation is necessary, and that management should be based on both (*Journal of Laryngology and Otology* 2011;125:668-72, doi:10.1017/S0022215111000569).

As more of our ageing population succumbs to osteoarthritis, a Dutch study has shown that “circumpatellar electrocautery” reduces anterior knee pain after total knee replacement. In this randomised trial, 131 patients requiring the operation for primary osteoarthritis received electrocautery, and 131 did not. A year later, the overall incidence of anterior knee pain was 26%; 19% in the electrocautery group and 32% in the control group. This relative risk reduction of 40% may be related to partial denervation or desensitisation of pain receptors, say the authors (*Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery* 2011;93-B:1054-9, doi:10.1302/0301-620X.93B8.26560).

A retrospective analysis of all 34 books in the *Asterix* illustrated comic series identified 704 instances of traumatic brain injury, mostly in adult male characters. The major cause of trauma was assault (98.8%). Trauma was classified as severe in over 50% of cases, with a Glasgow coma score of 3-8. Happily, despite the initial severity



A 70 year old woman on long term methotrexate and prednisolone for rheumatoid arthritis presented with a three month history of a well demarcated area of shallow ulceration and haemorrhagic crusting on the margins of both nostrils and columella. A biopsy showed non-specific ulceration with no malignancy. A viral swab was polymerase chain reaction positive for herpes simplex virus type 1. The lesion resolved with a prolonged course of aciclovir. Herpes simplex infection can present atypically in immunocompromised patients.

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Patient consent obtained.

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of injury, there were no deaths or permanent neurological deficits; 63.9% of the victims were Romans, and Gauls inflicted almost 90% of the injuries. Most victims had been wearing helmets, which had been lost in the vast majority of cases (*Acta Neurochirurgica (Wien)* 2011;153:1351-5).

Women with post-traumatic stress disorder are more likely to give birth to smaller babies and to deliver prematurely, says a study in *BJOG* (2011, doi:10.1111/j.1471-0528.2011.03071.x). Post-traumatic stress disorder after exposure to child abuse was most strongly associated with adverse outcomes, and African-American women were four times more likely to remain affected by the disorder at the time of their pregnancy, although they were at no greater risk for onset of post-traumatic stress disorder. The researchers call for greater awareness of these issues among those providing maternity services.

Estimates of the prevalence of childhood food allergy in the United States have been improved using a randomised cross sectional survey of households over nine months in 2009-10. Data

from over 40 000 children suggest that there are disparities in the clinical diagnosis of disease, and that the prevalence and severity of childhood food allergy are greater than previously reported. The overall prevalence of food allergy was 8% (95% CI 7.7 to 8.3) with nearly 40% of sufferers reporting severe reactions and 30% reporting multiple allergies. Peanut allergy was the most common problem (*Pediatrics* 2011;128:e9-17, doi:10.1542/peds.2011-0204).

A minimum number of hours of uninterrupted sleep may be needed to help consolidate memories. Scientists used light pulses to stimulate the brain cells involved in arousal from sleep in mice, and tested the effect on the ability of the mice to recognise an object they had previously explored. Fragmented sleep, regardless of duration or depth, impaired the animals' ability to distinguish between novel and familiar objects. The team suggest that the memory deficits seen in some human diseases might be tied to insufficiency of continuous sleep (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 2011, doi:10.1073/pnas.1015633108).

Social networking sites may provide a novel environment in which to deliver health promotion messages, especially sexual health promotion ones. A search of published work and social networking sites to identify existing sexual health promotion activities found 178 relevant schemes, but only one was identified through a traditional systematic search of the scientific literature. Facebook was the site most commonly used—it was involved in 71% of all the health promotion activities identified (*BMC Public Health* 2011;11:583, doi:10.1186/1471-2458-11-583).

A local politician has announced he's going to create a new bylaw that would outlaw smoking in open places in the historic town of Stony Stratford, in Buckinghamshire, UK. It's a town “blighted by cigarette butts” he says. But all is not well—his proposal went down like the proverbial lead balloon among locals, who protested with a “mass light-up,” forcing the council to postpone a public meeting to discuss the intended bylaw. One critic suggested that providing smokers with more places to throw away the butts might be a better solution (*The Telegraph*, 20 July 2011).

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