



An 84 year old woman with painless binocular blindness
Try the picture quiz in **ENDGAMES, p 485**

Whistleblowing in the medical world has a “tortured history,” especially in the UK’s National Health Service (*JRSM* 2011;104:278-82, doi:10.1258/jrsm.2011.110034). The term itself is English and derives from police blowing their whistles to alert colleagues and the public when they see a crime being committed and need assistance. In debating whether whistleblowing puts the patient’s or the profession’s interests at stake, the authors of this article—all whistleblowers themselves—ask “which doctor would you prefer for your relatives or yourself? A doctor that is prepared to report poor care to improve...outcome, or one that is not prepared to do so regardless of the consequences?”

WHO guidelines recommend broad spectrum antibiotics for children with severe acute malnutrition, but supporting evidence is scant. A systematic review identified just two randomised controlled trials, one “before and after” study, and two retrospective reports on clinical efficacy, together with 18 pharmacokinetic studies. The quality of the trials was poor and the results could not be pooled. The researchers call for large randomised trials to define optimal antibiotic treatment in malnourished children, and for research about the toxicity and pharmacokinetics of certain drugs (*Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 2011;89:593-606, doi:10.2471/BLT.10.084715).

Does olive oil protect against stroke? Among 7625 older participants in a French study who had no history of stroke at baseline, 148 incident strokes occurred. After adjusting for sociodemographic and dietary variables, physical activity, body mass index, and risk factors for stroke, greater use of olive oil was associated with a lower incidence of stroke. Those with intensive use had a 41% lower risk than never-users (95% confidence interval 6 to 63, $P=0.03$). Higher plasma oleic acid—an indirect marker of olive oil consumption—was also associated with lower stroke incidence in a smaller sample (*Neurology* 2011;77:418-25, doi:10.1212/wnl.0b013e318220abeb).

Stroke is also associated with age related macular degeneration. Researchers included data from 6207 participants aged over 55 years from the Rotterdam Study who were



The 5 year old son of a farmer presented with a one week history of swelling and inflammation of his left eyebrow. A diagnosis of kerion was made and he was treated with oral terbinafine and antibiotics. Pluckings from the eyebrow subsequently grew *Trichophyton verrucosum*. Kerion is an inflammatory reaction to animal ringworm, usually seen on the scalp of children and occasionally on the beard area of adults. Prompt treatment minimises the risk of scarring and permanent hair loss.

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stroke free at baseline. Late age related macular degeneration was associated with an increased risk of any stroke, owing to a strong association with intracerebral haemorrhage, but not with cerebral infarction, in the general older population. Early stages of age related macular degeneration were not linked to risk of stroke (*Stroke* 2011;42:2138-42, doi:10.1161/strokeaha.111.616359).

The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami provided the opportunity to evaluate the association between perceived early support and later mental health symptoms. A survey, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups were used to explore the experiences of 116 people severely affected by the tsunami. Official support was perceived as poor overall. Perceived ineffectiveness of support available in the first few days was associated with increased symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder 15-19 months later. The strongest theme to emerge was that support provided in a humane manner was perceived as effective, while support that was

uncoordinated, poorly communicated, or with limited accessibility was perceived as ineffective (*The Psychiatrist* 2011;35:283-8, doi:10.1192/pb.bp.110.030403).

Oral propranolol is gaining credence as a safe and effective first line treatment for infantile haemangiomas. A randomised controlled trial involving 40 children aged 9 weeks to 5 years—who had haemangiomas on the face or in sites with disfiguring potential—found that haemangioma growth stopped by week four in the treatment group, with significant decreases in redness and elevation at weeks 12 and 24. No significant hypoglycaemia, hypotension, or bradycardia occurred (*Pediatrics* 2011;128:e259-66, doi:10.1542/peds.2010-0029).

Despite its popularity in the United States (even among women who are at low risk of contralateral breast cancer), the evidence for contralateral prophylactic mastectomy is conflicting. It does reduce the risk of developing breast cancer in the second breast, but there’s no overall evidence that it reduces death from breast cancer, or overall mortality. Patients and doctors appear to labour under the impression that contralateral prophylactic mastectomy offers more benefit than it actually does. Genetic counselling should influence any decision to proceed with the operation (*The Oncologist* 2011;16:935-41, doi:10.1634/theoncologist.2011-0022).

Aorto-caval compression can be a problem in pregnant women receiving neural blocks for labour and caesarean section, depending on their position, and debate continues about which position is best for performing the technique. A prospective, observational study involving 25 women with uncomplicated pregnancies presenting for elective caesarean delivery at term reports that cardiac index (assessed by suprasternal Doppler and blood pressure monitoring) was higher when women were in the right lateral position compared with sitting and supine positions, and in the left lateral compared with sitting position. Researchers found no significant differences in fetal indices in any position (*Anesth Analg* 2011;113:318-22, doi:10.1213/ANE.0b013e31821f125c).

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