



Magnetic resonance imaging of the axial structures of the brain

Try the anatomy quiz in ENDGAMES, p 48

Minerva sometimes wishes she was a man because of the large number of studies that demonstrate advantages just to men—especially when chocolate consumption is concerned. A large prospective cohort of men was followed up for over 10 years, during which 1995 cases of incident stroke were recorded. Moderate chocolate consumption was associated with a reduced risk of stroke, with no differences by stroke subtype (*Neurology* 2012;79:1223-9, doi:10.1212/WNL.0b013e31826aacfa).

Are prolonged fevers more dangerous than short lived fevers for critically ill patients? No, a French study concluded—researchers found similar mortality rates between the two fever groups (*Critical Care* 2012;16:R150, doi:10.1186/cc11465). The team says that prolonged fevers are common and are mainly due to severe infections (especially ventilator associated pneumonia), but mixed infectious causes are also frequent and suggest the need for a careful search for multiple causes. Independent risk factors for prolonged fevers included cerebral injury at admission, severe sepsis, the number of infections, and extended periods of mechanical ventilation.

Older patients are under-represented in clinical trials but it is unclear why. In an analysis of breast cancer clinical trials (1079 patients), the main reason for not finding information about adults over 65 years old was trial unavailability or ineligibility. If eligible, trial participation did not differ significantly with age. Patients older than 65 years did express more concerns about potential side effects, had friends who were opposed to their participation, or believed that their participation would not benefit other generations (*The Oncologist* 2012;17:1180-90, doi:10.1634/theoncologist.2011-0384).

Danish surgeons hypothesised that one preoperative dose of dexamethasone before the repair of laparoscopic inguinal hernia would reduce postoperative pain. They devised a randomised double blind trial and enrolled 80 patients to receive steroids or placebo before surgery. They found no differences between groups in terms of postoperative pain, discomfort, or fatigue. However, dexamethasone did confer a significant benefit on nausea, and resulted in significantly lower use of antiemetics in the post-anaesthesia care unit (*British Journal of Surgery* 2012;99:1374-80, doi:10.1002/bjs.8876).



An 88 year old man with glaucoma presented with vertical mid-facial skin excoriation and bilateral cicatricial ectropion of the lower eyelids. He had been taking latanoprost, levobunolol, and topical ocular lubricants. We prescribed yellow soft paraffin (lanolin free) topically to his facial lesions and withheld all the eye drops, greatly improving his skin condition within one week. Contact dermatitis is an unusual complication of latanoprost and preservative drop allergy. Additionally, patients with ectropion have an increased risk of developing severe dermatitis, owing to the expulsion of drops onto the skin surface.

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Patient consent obtained.

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How do mental health professionals conceptualise the association between their spiritual beliefs and their work? Themes collated from semi-structured interviews included the conflict between science and religion, the personal support that faith provides for many, and the idea that beliefs made professionals better at their job by reconciling differences between science and religion and by allowing them to recognise compatibilities between seeking meaning and subjective experience. Most participants welcomed the opportunity to express and discuss this interface, but were concerned how it would be perceived (*The Psychiatrist* 2012;36:249-54, doi:10.1192/pb.bp.111.036954).

Leaders typically carry heavy responsibility, but might not experience high levels of stress (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 2012, doi:10.1073/pnas.1207042109).

Leadership tends to confer a heightened sense of control, which counters stress. Thus, researchers looked at salivary cortisol concentrations in 65 non-leaders and 148 leaders and analysed participants' self reported anxiety questionnaires. Leaders had significantly lower cortisol amounts and reported less anxiety than non-leaders, regardless of age, sex, and ethnicity. Increased power led to reduced cortisol concentrations.

Increased concentrations of haemoglobin are thought to elevate blood pressure—and so it proved in a large cohort of healthy adults (*Hypertension* 2012;60:936-41, doi:10.1161/hypertensionaha.112.193565). Over 100 000 donors of whole blood and plasma made nearly 700 000 visits to the blood bank. The cohort split was 50:50 for men (mean age 49.3 years) and women (42.4 years). Haemoglobin concentration was positively associated with both systolic and diastolic blood pressure, and the effects were consistent between people and within each person.

Why do army general duties medical officers (GDMOs) refer patients to senior colleagues? GDMOs deployed in Afghanistan were found to have a mean rate of 0.9 referrals per week, owing to inexperience, lack of access to investigations, and the potential for deterioration in places without adequate support (*Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps* 2012;158:208-12). Typical reasons for referral were dental or musculoskeletal injuries, abdominal pain of unknown cause, and anogenital problems. Influencing factors included the availability of flights and the timing of the tour in relation to leave.

Elevated concentrations of high sensitivity C reactive protein (hsCRP) predicts depression in patients before undergoing coronary artery bypass surgery (*Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery* 2012;144:500-5, doi:10.1016/j.jtcvs.2012.01.034). Preoperative depression was independently associated with women and hsCRP after adjusting for age, sex, and university level education. Postoperative depression was associated with hsCRP only; this association remained significant after adjusting for postoperative treatments or major adverse cardiovascular events during the six month follow-up.

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