

# MINERVA

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Genuine condition or disease mongering? “Pathological internet use” (PIU) is ravaging Europe; a study of risky behaviour among adolescents in 11 countries reports an overall prevalence of PIU of 4.4%. Prevalence was higher among male adolescents than female adolescents. The highest ranked online activities were watching videos, frequenting chat rooms, and social networking. Male participants played more games, and female participants were more involved in social networking. Urban living, not living with a biological parent, and parental unemployment were identified as high risk factors for PIU (*Addiction* 2012;107:2210-22, doi:10.1111/j.1360-0443.201.03946.x).

Magnesium treatment results in significant pain reduction and significantly improved lumbar movements in patients with refractory, chronic, neuropathic lower back pain. In a double blind, randomised controlled study, researchers found significant benefits of intravenous infusions of 1 g magnesium sulphate (in 250 mL of 0.9% saline for 4 h per day, for 14 days) followed by four weeks of oral magnesium, on top of a usual regimen of anticonvulsants, antidepressants, and simple analgesia. Magnesium acts as a blocker for *N*-methyl-D-aspartate receptors, and stops “wind-up” sensitisation of the spinal cord (*Anaesthesia* 2012, doi:10.1111/anae.12107).

Minerva may yet be grateful that she was forced to drink warm creamy milk at school, even though she thought it tasted revolting. A team from Bristol reports that childhood milk consumption is associated with better physical performance—faster walking times and better balance—in old age (*Age and Ageing* 2012;41:776-84, doi:10.1093/ageing/afs052).

Women with pelvic endometriosis often have gastroenterological symptoms (such as constipation, pain on defecation, and appetite problems)—but are these due to the disease infiltrating the bowel, or something else? A prospective cohort study looked at 116 women with endometriosis in the Pouch of Douglas, deep endometriosis without rectal infiltration, and deep disease infiltrating the rectum. The findings suggest that these symptoms are caused by cyclical inflammatory phenomena irritating the digestive tract, rather than actual infiltration (*Human Reproduction* 2012;27:3440-9, doi:10.1093/HUMREP/DES322).



A 16 week old, preterm infant presented with a six week history of erythema and crusting over the lips, nose, and small joints of the hands and feet. Viral and bacteriological swabs were negative. The infant was breastfed and there were no concerns regarding development. However, the infant's serum zinc level was lower than 2 µmol/L (normal range 10-18). Oral zinc supplementation at 1 mg/kg per day cleared the eruption within 48 h. Clinicians should consider zinc deficiency in premature infants, even if breastfed, who present with perioral and acral lesions.

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Parental consent obtained.

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What's the risk of developing delayed pneumonia after rib fractures? Slight, concludes a Canadian study. Of 1057 patients with minor thoracic injuries, 32.8% had at least one rib fracture, 8.2% had asthma, and 3.4% had chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Overall, only 0.6% of patients developed pneumonia during follow-up. Smoking, alcohol intoxication, and inability to cough were not significantly associated with delayed pneumonia (*Annals of Emergency Medicine* 2012;60:726-31, doi:10.1016/j.annemergmed.2012.03.020).



## A sinister cause of shoulder pain

Try the picture quiz in  
ENDGAMES, p 40

Having patients watch themselves on television while undergoing aural microsuction of their mastoid cavities dulls their pain and improves acceptance of the procedure (*Annals of the Royal College of Surgeons of England* 2012;95:34-6, doi:10.1308/003588413X13511609955535). Owing to the loud noise generated close to their ears, most people find the procedure uncomfortable and distressing. But in a prospective study, average scores for visual analogue pain were significantly lower for people who watched themselves on television than for those who did not. Two thirds of participants also preferred to watch themselves.

Can *Helicobacter pylori* protect against gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD)? A study of *H pylori* status in an African-American population showed a significantly negative association with oesophagitis, suggesting a protective role in its pathogenesis. The study population had an *H pylori* prevalence of 38%, which the researchers surmise might be why GORD complications, such as Barrett's oesophagus and adenocarcinoma of the oesophagus, are low in African-Americans (*Digestive Diseases and Sciences* 2012;57:2924-8).

Rescuers providing hands-on defibrillation and wearing medical examination gloves might not be protected from defibrillation charges (*Resuscitation* 2012;83:1467-72). Researchers tested 460 gloves and four different materials (chloroprene, latex, nitrile, and vinyl) to determine the voltage level needed to produce a specific amount of current flow. They found that current flow through the gloves was non-linear with respect to voltage, and that current flow varied among different glove types, making the risks of hands-on defibrillation difficult to predict.

A study in *Clinical and Experimental Allergy* suggests that parents of children with asthma need not worry about them catching colds (2012;42:1734-44, doi:10.1111/cea.12005). Researchers found that naturally occurring respiratory viral infections induced a robust, innate immune response in asthmatic children, and that most infections didn't actually cause symptoms. In nasal aspirate samples from asthmatic children, researchers detected viral infections during many “well” weeks. Furthermore, strong cytokine production, although higher during “sick” weeks, was also found during symptom free weeks.

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