

MINERVA

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An 81 year old man with a blistering rash

Try the picture quiz in
ENDGAMES, p 38

One dose of loperamide to delay the passage of bile results in a cleaner caecum and more polyps being detected, compared with usual colon preparation. Patients received loperamide (n=98) or placebo (n=102) after gut lavage once the passage of liquid stool had stopped. The placebo group had more “dirty” caecums than the loperamide group (12.7% v 2%; P=0.004). Overall gut appearance was also judged “poor” more often in the placebo group than in the loperamide group (18.6% v 9.2%, P=0.05; *Diseases of the Colon and Rectum* 2013;56:120-5).

Students who binge drink are more likely than others to join the United States military. Responses of more than 14 000 high school students in their final year were sought in the 2008 Monitoring the Future survey. Results indicated that those students who intended to join the military after leaving school were significantly more likely to binge drink than were those with no intention to enlist. The association remained significant after controlling for sociodemographic and lifetime drinking characteristics—and as binge drinking increased, so did the propensity to join the military (*Military Medicine* 2013;178:37-42).

Does the use of benzodiazepines in the community influence the occurrence of pneumonia and death from pneumonia? A case controlled, population based cohort study suggests that it does. Exposure to benzodiazepines was associated with a significantly increased risk of community acquired pneumonia (CAP), and the drugs particularly implicated were diazepam, lorazepam, and temazepam. As a class, benzodiazepines were significantly associated with increased mortality at 30 days in patients with a diagnosis of CAP (*Thorax* 2013;68:163-70).

Continuous infusion of β lactam antibiotics in severe sepsis produces better patient outcomes than intermittent bolus injections (*Clinical Infectious Diseases* 2013;56:236-44). In a randomised controlled study conducted in five intensive care units across Australia and Hong Kong, continuous infusions achieved higher plasma concentrations of antibiotics than intermittent use, with a significant improvement in “clinical cure” rates in the continuous group (70% v 43%, P=0.037). Survival to hospital discharge was higher in the continuous group than in the intermittent group (90% v 80%; P=0.47).



A 68 year old man, who kept pigeons and took alemtuzumab for chronic lymphocytic leukaemia, presented with a three month history of non-healing ulceration at the end of his upper limb amputation stump. Traumatic amputation of the lower arm had occurred 40 years earlier; he had worn no prosthesis. Ulceration was preceded by a tender erythematous nodule, and antibiotics had no effect. After cryptococcus was isolated from a skin biopsy, amphotericin B and flucytosine were given with complete resolution. Pigeon excreta could contain *Cryptococcus neoformans*. Cryptococcal infection can be fatal in immunosuppressed patients.

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Patient consent obtained.

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Disrupted sleep shortly after performing rescue and clean-up operations following traumatic events is associated with poor physical health 12 months later. After adjusting for age, sex, body mass index, and initial distress levels, researchers found that early complaints about sleep quality were associated with more physical symptoms, poorer perceived health, and increased use of healthcare services at follow-up (*Psychosomatic Medicine* 2012;75:196-201).

Some surgeons perform bedside ultrasonography (US) to detect appendicitis and gallstones. A systematic review looked at studies comparing US done by surgeons with the gold standard of pathological examination or US done by radiologists (*American Journal of Surgery* 2013;205:102-8). US performed by surgeons achieved a pooled sensitivity of 0.92 and pooled specificity of 0.96 for appendicitis, and a pooled sensitivity of 0.96 and pooled specificity of 0.99 for gallstones.

People who receive cord blood transplantation (CBT) for conditions such as leukaemia and aplastic anaemia are at risk of developing new autoimmune diseases. In a European cohort of over 700 CBT recipients, the accumulative incidence of new autoimmune disease after CBT was 5% at 12 months and 6.6% at five years (*Blood* 2013;121:1059-64). Patients who developed autoimmune diseases were younger and more likely to have undergone CBT for non-malignant conditions. The most common new autoimmune diseases were haemolytic anaemia and thrombocytopenia.

Intranasal ketamine reduces the severity but not the duration of prolonged aura in migraine. In a pilot randomised controlled trial of 30 people with migraine, researchers used intranasal midazolam as an active control against intranasal ketamine, and tested both drugs over three episodes of migraine (*Neurology* 2013;80:642). Midazolam had no effect on migraine aura. This work follows observations of ketamine in animal experiments, supporting the hypothesis that migraine auras are the clinical correlate of “cortical spreading depression,” where neuronal depolarisation is slow and followed by suppressed neural activity.

Adverse pregnancy outcomes are significantly more common in women diagnosed with urinary tract or renal stones the year before delivery, than in those without them. Low birth weight, preterm births, small for gestational age babies, and caesarean section delivery were all significantly increased in women with stones in a large population based study (*Acta Obstetrica et Gynecologica Scandinavica* 2013;92:69-74). The mechanism linking stone formation with preterm birth is unclear, but changes in stone composition occur during pregnancy—suggesting that metabolic adaptations throughout pregnancy could be lithogenic.

Having a large network of friends is critical to the psychological wellbeing of middle aged adults (*Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 2013;67:166-71). Researchers used information collected from over 7000 adults born in Great Britain in 1958. Having fewer friends at age 45 was associated with poorer psychological wellbeing at age 50, over and above the differences accounted for by educational factors, material status, and previous psychological health.

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