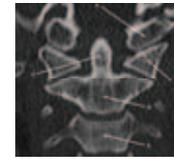


# MINERVA

Send comments or suggest ideas to Minerva: [minerva@bmj.com](mailto:minerva@bmj.com)



## Coronal computed tomography of the upper cervical spine

Try the anatomy quiz in ENDGAMES, p 40

Minerva is interested that the advice she often hears, and sometimes gives—that having sex expedites the onset of labour—may be an old midwife's tale. Malaysian researchers conducted a randomised study of 1200 women with uncomplicated singleton pregnancies from 35 weeks' gestation. Women received encouragement to have sex as a safe method to start labour and to avoid induction, or were simply advised that sex was safe. Sex before delivery was reported significantly more often in the intervention group, but onset and induction of labour did not differ between groups (*BJOG* 2013;120:338-45, doi:10.1111/1471-0528.12054).

Trigeminal neurostimulation reduces the frequency of migraine, according to a double blind, sham controlled Belgian trial of 67 patients (*Neurology* 2013;80:697-704; doi:10.1212/wnl.0b013e3182825055). Patients with at least two migraine attacks a month were randomised to supraorbital transcutaneous stimulation or sham stimulation. The stimulation device was applied daily for 20 minutes over three months. The mean number of migraine days decreased significantly in the intervention group (6.94 to 4.88;  $P=0.023$ ) but not in the sham group (6.54 to 6.22;  $P=0.608$ ).

Men with complete spinal cord injuries seem to have significantly smaller prostate glands than able bodied men, and age related increases in prostate volume have been detected in men with incomplete spinal cord injuries, but not in those with complete lesions. Researchers of the prospective study conclude that sustained central innervation of the human prostate has a role in prostate growth, but central denervation does not lead to glandular atrophy, which in animal studies is caused by local denervation (*British Journal of Urology International* 2013, doi:10.1111/bju.12027).

Dry eyes can be caused by drugs and herbal products, and is a common complication after blepharoplasty (eyelid surgery). For patients undergoing surgery, US plastic surgeons suggest that they be specifically asked about any non-prescription preparations they might be taking—in particular niacin, echinacea, and kava. The main prescription drugs that cause dry eyes are antihistamines, decongestants, antidepressants, anticonvulsants, antipsychotics, antiparkinsonian drugs,  $\beta$  blockers, and hormone



A four month old boy presented with a haemangioma involving the left upper eyelid, which distorted his palpebral fissure and visual axis. Accompanied by monitoring of glucose and blood pressure, Oral propranolol was given, increasing gradually to a dose of 2 mg/kg per day. Photographs show the haemangioma immediately before and after 14 days' treatment. Propranolol is emerging as a rapid, well tolerated, and effective first line treatment of such lesions.

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Parental consent obtained.

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replacement therapy (*Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery* 2013;131:159-67, doi:10.1097/prs.0b013e318272a00e).

Unsolicited reviews by an infectious disease physician (IDP) have led to reduced antibiotic prescribing on medical and surgical wards in a French hospital. Ward doctors were encouraged to withdraw or de-escalate antibiotic therapy,

switch to oral treatment, and reduce the duration of antibiotic therapy wherever possible. Of 857 prescriptions, 54% prompted unsolicited counselling from the IDP. The ward doctors' compliance rate with the advice was 77%. Non-compliance was independently related to surgical wards and the advice to shorten antibiotic duration (*European Journal of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases* 2013;32:227-35, doi:10.1007/s10096-012-1734-3).

Berberine gelatin treatment seems to be safe and effective for minor recurrent aphthous ulcers. Berberine is an ammonium salt found in the roots, stems, and bark of many plants. It was tested in a Chinese randomised controlled trial of 84 adults, and the active ingredient or placebo was applied four times a day for five days. Berberine gelatin significantly reduced the pain score, ulcer size, erythema, and exudate, compared with placebo (*Oral Surgery, Oral Medicine, Oral Pathology, Oral Radiology* 2013;115:212-7, doi:10.1016/j.oooo.2012.09.009).

Transplanted kidneys survive significantly longer in Europe than in the United States, suggests a review from 2005 to 2008. At one year, survival of deceased and living donor grafts was similar for Europeans and white and Hispanic Americans, but slightly lower for African Americans. Five and 10 year survival was significantly higher for Europeans than for US populations; differences were greatest in younger recipients. Immunosuppression may be relevant: coverage under Medicare stops at three years in the US, but continues without restriction in Europe (*Transplantation* 2013;95:267-74, doi:10.1097/TP.0b013e3182708ea8).

Plain tobacco packaging was designed to increase visual attention to printed health warnings. Research indicates that this design works on adult non-smokers and weekly smokers, but not on daily smokers. What about children and adolescents? A study of three secondary schools in Bristol reports that among "experimenters" and "weekly smokers," plain packaging increased visual attention to health warnings, and away from branding. But daily smokers, even relatively early in their smoking habit, persistently avoided looking at the health warnings on the packs (*Addiction* 2013;108:406-12, doi:10.1111/j.1360-0443.2012.04026.x).

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