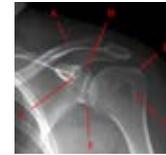


MINERVA

Send comments or suggest ideas to Minerva: minerva@bmj.com



Sites of tendon insertion on a shoulder radiograph

Try the anatomy quiz in **ENDGAMES**, p 36

Doctors generally live longer than most people, unless they kill themselves first. In a Swedish academic hospital, about a third of the medical staff had had suicidal thoughts in the preceding year (*BMC Public Health* 2014;14:271, doi:10.1186/1471-2458-14-271). The differences between junior and senior doctors were not always as expected. Harassment was a trigger for suicidal thoughts in seniors but not in juniors. Spending more than half the week doing research increased feelings of harassment. In both groups “presenteeism” during illness increased the risk. Juniors felt no benefit from meetings to discuss difficult experiences, but they did respond to empowering leadership.

To Minerva, this Swedish study suggests that no single strategy has been identified that can reduce suicidal thoughts in all contexts. But this is not for lack of trying. A useful survey of all randomised controlled trials of psychosocial interventions for suicidal ideation, plans, and attempts has just appeared in *BMC Psychiatry* (2014;14:86, doi:10.1186/1471-244X-14-86). The researchers found 131 randomised controlled trials published across a range of medical, psychological, and sociology journals. They promise to update this annually from their appropriately named base at the Medical Research Council Centre for Research Excellence for Suicide Prevention (CRESP), located at the Black Dog Institute, Australia.

Breaking bad news is a skill that health professionals learn over the years by instruction, observation, and practice. Doing it well across barriers of language and cultural expectation requires an even higher level of experience and ability. Yet such attempts are often mediated by people who have no training at all—lay translators. Minerva welcomes an excellent qualitative study of their experiences in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* (2014, doi:10.1177/0141076814527275), with the title “don’t blame the middle man.” Far from deserving blame, translators who work with patients at the end of life deserve training, support, debriefing, and a lot of gratitude.

Fibrosis—scarring—is a common healing and disease process mediated by myofibroblasts, but in the 21st century we are still strangely uncertain about where these cells come from. As a result, we stand helplessly by while fibrosis



A male infant was born at term after an uneventful pregnancy with normal antenatal scans. He was noted to be oedematous, with a large umbilical cord that contained a purple, tortuous structure along its length. The umbilical ring was normal and three vessels were seen. There was some spontaneous bleeding and blood tests showed anaemia and thrombocytopenia, which were treated. After imaging and review by the paediatric surgeons, it was decided that the unusual look of the cord resulted from antenatal haemorrhage into the Wharton’s jelly. By day 8 the cord had dried and assumed a more usual appearance.

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Parental consent obtained.

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destroys the function of hearts, brains, kidneys, livers, and limbs. Three authors from the MRC Centre for Inflammation Research, Queen’s Medical Research Institute, University of Edinburgh, suggest that we would do well to look hard at pericytes, because these are the most likely precursor cells in the process of scarring (*QJM* 2014, doi:10.1093/qjmed/hcu067). Expect many trials of monoclonal antibodies targeting pericytes in the future, but also expect difficulties and harms as we learn how to stop disease without stopping the healing process.

Is it a CRIME when we fail to STOPP PIDU? Glossary: CRIME: CRITERIA to Assess Appropriate Medication Use among Elderly Complex Patients (CRIME) project, an observational study performed in geriatric and internal medicine acute care wards of seven Italian hospitals

(*Age and Ageing* 2014, doi:10.1093/ageing/afu029). PIDU is potentially inappropriate drug use. STOPP stands for screening tool of older person’s prescriptions, whereas Beer’s criteria are an alternative scoring system. The CRIME study found that the prevalence of PIDU was 58.4% applying Beers criteria, 50.4% applying STOPP criteria, and 75.0% combining both sets of criteria. In other words, we are criminally overmedicating a lot of old people.

Minerva has watched with amazement over the past 15 years as the medical community has been persuaded to accept a measurement of kidney function called the estimated glomerular filtration rate (eGFR). As a result of this concocted formula of serum creatinine, age, and sex, more than a 10th of the population can now enjoy having chronic renal failure. But in contexts where it is vital to know what the kidneys are doing, the eGFR falls flat. In stage 1 seminoma, underdosing of adjuvant carboplatin by 10% has been shown to almost double the rate of relapse, so correct dosing based on accurate GFR measurement is crucial. In a series of 426 patients with seminoma treated in Southampton and Poole hospitals, an accurate GFR was obtained by measuring radioisotope clearance, and this was compared with the eGFR derived by several commonly used formulas (*Annals of Oncology* 2014, doi:10.1093/annonc/mdu129). All of these eGFR measurements would have led to a number of patients receiving an ineffective dose of carboplatin.

It seems that some people responsible for infection control are unaware that the body is normally covered with harmless microbes. In the otolaryngology division at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, otolaryngologists often remove ear wax with a curette under direct visualisation using an operating microscope or LumiView magnification. An edict went forth that in future such curettes must come in sterile packages. The otolaryngologists rebelled and audited 1457 procedures carried out with unpackaged curettes (*Annals of Otolaryngology, Rhinology and Laryngology* 2014, doi:10.1177/0003489414526850). Not one patient had symptoms or signs suggestive of otitis externa in the two weeks after the procedure.

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