



A man with rust coloured urine and normocytic anaemia

Try the case review quiz in
ENDGAMES, p 35

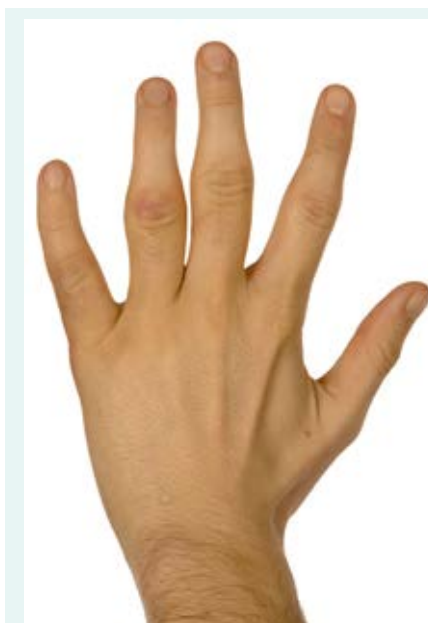
It is often easier to start long term medication than to stop it. In older people, the “geriatrician’s scalpel” can be wielded to good effect to cut out multiple drugs, but do paediatricians and general practitioners need a similar scalpel for children who may not need their long term drugs? Unfortunately, this is a largely evidence free area. Cochrane reviewers searched for trials on stopping long acting β_2 agonists (LABA) for children with asthma well controlled on LABA and inhaled corticosteroids (*Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2015, doi:10.1002/14651858.CD011316.pub2). They found none: meaning that once these inhalers have been prescribed, the default position is to go on prescribing them, with unknown long term effects.

In France, the mean number of medicines given in 2011 to children under the age of 2 was nine (*Archives of Disease in Childhood* 2015, doi:10.1136/archdischild-2014-307224). Domperidone was given to 21% of them. The average number of medicines prescribed to French children annually up to the age of 17 was five. *Étourdissant*.

Treatment for obstructive sleep apnoea brings welcome relief to most people who experience it, and to their spouses and partners. But a study of US veterans with obstructive sleep apnoea shows that even when treated with continuous positive airway pressure, it is associated with threefold higher risk of coronary heart disease and stroke, and an elevated risk of renal deterioration (*Thorax* 2015, doi:10.1136/thoraxjnl-2015-206970).

Vascular pathology has been consistently identified as a risk factor for dementia and specifically for Alzheimer’s disease. So it is not surprising that a retrospective cohort study based on The Health Improvement Network (THIN) finds an increased risk of about 30% for stroke in patients with Alzheimer’s disease (*Age and Ageing* 2015, doi:10.1093/ageing/afv061) compared with patients with non-Alzheimer’s disease dementia. Perhaps more surprising is that the risk for seizures is five times higher.

A recent *BMJ* article pointed out that most fractures in people of 70 years or older occur in those without osteoporosis (*BMJ* 2015, doi:10.1136/bmj.h2088) so the answer to the problem cannot lie in more bone densitometry



A 24 year old man was referred to rheumatology with a five year history of bilateral, painless, dorsolateral proximal interphalangeal joint swelling of his index, middle, and ring fingers with mild skin thickening. Magnetic resonance imaging, C reactive protein, and rheumatoid factor were normal. Skin biopsy showed hyperkeratosis, acanthosis, and dermal oedema consistent with pachydermodactyly, a superficial benign digital fibromatosis. This “classic” type of pachydermodactyly is typically associated with compulsive habitual finger interlacing or rubbing, which results in compensatory tissue changes. Atypical types can affect other joints. Pachydermodactyly is rare but probably under-recognised. Prompt clinical diagnosis may prevent unnecessary investigations and provide reassurance for patients.

Leila Ferguson (leilaferguson@gmail.com), specialist registrar in dermatology, **Sanjeev Patel**, consultant rheumatologist, **Colin Holden**, consultant dermatologist, Departments of Dermatology and Rheumatology, St Helier Hospital, Carshalton SM5 1AA, UK
Patient consent obtained.

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and bisphosphonate prescribing. A five year follow-up report from a Finnish trial suggests that exercise programmes could be far more effective, reducing falls by a half and fractures by even more (*Age and Ageing* 2015, doi:10.1093/ageing/afv064). Participants were women aged 70-78 without osteoporosis and the most effective exercise programme combined resistance and balance jumping.

Testicular self-examination remains an area of controversy. “Awareness” campaigns have come and gone, but the US Preventive Services Task Force now recommends against it. Not so fast, say a group of US urologists in a paper called “Off-label” usage of testicular self-examination (TSE): benefits beyond cancer detection” (*American Journal of Men’s Health* 2015, doi:10.1177/1557988315584942). This is truly an article that can be recommended to all men of feeling.

In the 1830s, Rugby School in Warwickshire, UK, adopted a game of football in which players could pick up the ball and be fought for it, to build character in future rulers of the British Empire. Unfortunately there is increasing evidence that this practice is not good for the brain. The latest comes in postmortem brain sections from a businessman who died at 57, two years after developing manifest dementia (*Quarterly Journal of Medicine* 2015, doi:10.1093/qjmed/hcv070).

These show widespread lesions characteristic of traumatic brain injury, which he experienced during three decades of collisions playing prop forward in high level rugby union.

Even playing a musical instrument has its hazards. One of the worst is focal dystonia, which severely impairs the ability to execute highly trained movements that are needed in playing the instrument. But a study of professional musicians in Germany who developed dystonia reaches a surprising conclusion (*Occupational Medicine* 2015, doi:10.1093/occmed/kqv038). It found no differences in life satisfaction between players with dystonia and controls, or between players who had to change their profession and those who did not, and no correlations between life satisfaction and the duration or the course of the disease.

Chefs too face many perils. To deal with some of these, they wear special uniforms, though a study of the thermal protection afforded by chefs’ attire (*Annals of Occupational Hygiene*, 2015, doi:10.1093/annhyg/mev034) finds that all existing types are liable to ignite readily. Better fabrics and insulation layers are proposed. And Minerva has never been able to understand the silly hat that chefs wear. It should at least carry ear flaps to shut out torrents of expletives from television celebrities.

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