

EDITOR'S CHOICE

CHRISTMAS 2014: EDITOR'S CHOICE

Without frontiers

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Forget borders. This year's Christmas articles go wherever our fancy took us.

First off, discover the most common reasons why swimmers abandon their attempt to swim the English Channel (doi:10.1136/bmj.g7372). Then ditch the Speedos and Vaseline and travel with us to places as varied as Las Vegas (doi:10.1136/bmj.g7669); Camp Bastion, Afghanistan (doi:10.1136/bmj.g7448); and earthquake shattered Christchurch, New Zealand (doi:10.1136/bmj.g7260). (Pack some yeast but leave your vitamin D behind.)

Dazzle friends by knowing the origin of the term "armchair socialist" and why it's a misnomer (doi:10.1136/bmj.g7073). Read Nigel Hawkes's distillation of the responses of the first 50 subjects of our BMJ Confidential column (doi:10.1136/bmj.g7623). And catch up, if you must, with the friendship circles of "global influential celebrities" (doi:10.1136/bmj.g7185).

As always, there's some serious material to counterbalance the fluff. At our request, Richard Smith digested some of the recent crop of diet books. He concluded that "bold policies have been based on fragile science, and the long term results may be terrible" (doi:10.1136/bmj.g7654). It turns out that the scientific basis for reducing dietary fat may be even less secure than that for the recommendations made on a range of medical topics on television talk shows (doi:10.1136/bmj.g7346). Half of these either have no evidence or are contradicted by the best available evidence. If you've ever wondered where the fat goes when you "burn it off," Ruben Meerman and Andrew Brown explain (doi:10.1136/bmj.g7257).

Erudite accounts are provided of the medical -nyms, both epo- and acro-. Jeffrey Aronson discusses medical eponyms, their classification and natural history (doi:10.1136/bmj.g7586). Showing that eponyms are anything but dead, Thomas Gordon Campbell and Robert Trachter coin a new eponymous syndrome (doi:10.1136/bmj.g7423) and D Mark Chaput de Saintonge a

new eponymous sign (the "ça pue" sign) (doi:10.1136/bmj.g7550).

Anton Pottograd and colleagues shine a light on medical acronyms, adding an assessment of their quality, using the BEAUTY and CHEATING criteria (doi:10.1136/bmj.g7092). Too late to be included in their assessment was the acronymically entitled CARTOONS KILL, a study of children's animated cartoons that shows that their first few minutes can be scarier than *Psycho* (doi:10.1136/bmj.g7184). If you care about words, you'll wince at how the English language can be mangled both by humans (doi:10.1136/bmj.g7344) and by a web based translation tool (doi:10.1136/bmj.g7392).

Too much novelty? We have further episodes of two of our longest running Christmas sagas. The battle of the sexes goes another round with an examination of male idiot theory (which states that men are idiots and idiots do stupid things) (doi:10.1136/bmj.g7094). And Elizabeth Travis and colleagues assemble yet more evidence for the overweening superiority of the orthopaedic surgeon. Not only are they stronger and smarter than anaesthetists, they're also better at telling the time (doi:10.1136/bmj.g7182).

Respond to our editorial on music in the operating theatre to let us know what music you like to play while working (doi:10.1136/bmj.g7436), and tell us whether your hospital is providing meals for on-call staff on Christmas Day (doi:10.1136/bmj.g7269). Of the 58 hospitals that responded to her inquiry, Emma Gosnell found that only 37 were serving Christmas dinner.

Most important of all: please don't forget to dig deep for this year's charity, Médecins Sans Frontières (doi:10.1136/bmj.g7402). It's a pity this worthy charity has already nabbed that name: it would have made a great cover line for this year's Christmas issue.

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