



NEWS

Seven days in medicine: 9-15 January

Saturday 9th

Doctors call for Keogh to resign More than 1000 doctors called for the resignation of Bruce Keogh, medical director of the NHS in England, after revelations that he allowed Department of Health officials to “sex up” a letter to the BMA asking for assurances about the junior doctors’ strike. In the letter Keogh had asked the BMA to guarantee that juniors would be available for work within an hour in the event of a terrorist attack such as the one that occurred in Paris in November.

Sunday 10th

Chief medical officer warns of dangers of strike Sally Davies, England’s chief medical officer, told the *Sunday Times* that she wanted junior doctors to call off their planned strike. She told the newspaper, “Industrial action will lead to patients suffering, and no doctor wants to see that happen.”

Monday 11th

Benefit cuts will increase risk of homelessness The charity Macmillan Cancer Support called for a halt to the UK government’s plans to cut the weekly benefit paid to people who are assessed as too ill to work but who may be capable of working in the future, from £102.15 to £70.15 from 2017. The charity’s survey of nearly 1000 people with cancer found that one in 10 would be unable or would struggle to pay the rent or mortgage if these cuts to Employment and Support Allowance go ahead.

Proton pump inhibitors are linked to risk of chronic kidney disease Proton pump inhibitor use is associated with a 20-50% higher risk of incident chronic kidney disease, an observational study published in *JAMA Internal Medicine* found. The 10 year estimated absolute risk of chronic kidney disease among proton pump users was 11.8%, and the expected risk, had they not used them, was 8.5%. Similar findings were demonstrated for acute kidney injury. (See *The BMJ*’s full story at doi:10.1136/bmj.i128.)

Long term opioid analgesics are linked to depression Long term use of prescription opioid analgesics is associated with increased risk of new onset depression, showed an analysis of three large US healthcare databases totalling over 100 000 patients. Newly diagnosed depression after opioid analgesic use occurred in 12% of patients in the Veterans Health Administration database, 9% of the Baylor Scott & White database, and 11% of the Henry Ford Health System. The mean lag time between the end of opioid use and new onset depression was 3.4 years. (Full *BMJ* story doi:10.1136/bmj.i134.)

Tuesday 12th

US guidelines advise mammogram every two years New US guidelines confirmed that women at average risk for breast cancer should have mammography screening every other year from age 50 to 74. The task force said that mammography screening is effective in reducing deaths from breast cancer among women aged 40 to 74. The decision to start screening in women under 50 should be an individual one taking into account a woman’s health history and preferences, it said. (Full *BMJ* story doi:10.1136/bmj.i118.)

Coils implanted into lungs show promise in emphysema

Implanting tiny coils in the lungs of patients with severe emphysema improved exercise capacity at six months, a study published in *JAMA* found. French researchers studied the effects of delivering coils of nitinol (a metal alloy) into the lungs with a bronchoscope. The coils aim to restore elasticity to lung tissue. Over three years the incremental cost effectiveness ratio would be about \$270 000 (£185 000; €248 000) per quality adjusted life year, similar to the cost of lung volume reduction surgery in the US. (Full *BMJ* story doi:10.1136/bmj.i133.)

Wednesday 13th

Frozen faecal matter is as good as fresh for transplantation

Restoring protective colonic microbiota in patients with recurrent *Clostridium difficile* infection can be done just as well by transplanting frozen, and then defrosted, faecal matter as with fresh stools, a study published in *JAMA* showed. Frozen faecal microbiota transplantation would avoid many of the logistical burdens that clinicians face when preparing fresh material. (Full *BMJ* story doi:10.1136/bmj.i138.)

Shackleton had hole in heart The explorer Ernest Shackleton may have had a hole in the heart, doctors wrote in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*. Shackleton, who led the Endurance Voyage across the Antarctic in 1914-16, had crossed the mountains and glaciers of South Georgia without any health problems, but in later expeditions his repeated attacks of breathlessness and weakness alarmed his companions. Doctors used material at the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge, UK, to diagnose an atrial septal defect. Shackleton died of a myocardial infarction in 1922, a few hours after arriving in South Georgia to begin his fourth expedition. He was 47.

New guidance on TB The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence published guidance on how to better treat and prevent tuberculosis. England had the highest number of TB cases in Europe in 2014 at 6523, 39% of them in London. The new guideline highlights the need to search out active cases in communities most at risk and recommends that all under 65s with latent TB should be treated.

Thursday 14th

Low cost mesh for hernia repair is as good as commercial mesh Men undergoing hernia repair using a low cost mesh have a similar rate of hernia recurrence and postoperative complications as those treated with a commercial mesh, showed a randomised trial in Uganda. Costing US\$125 (£86; €115) in Uganda, commercial meshes are too expensive for most patients

in low and middle income countries, so researchers compared it with a low cost mesh of 100% polyethylene that is normally used for mosquito netting and costs less than \$1. (Full *BMJ* story doi:10.1136/bmj.i168.)

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