



# Leukaemia: all things being unequal . . . and other stories

## Childhood leukaemia survival

Improvements in survival from childhood leukaemia are an inspiring demonstration of the progress of scientific medicine over recent decades. But they also show great global inequality. A survey of individual data for 89 828 children from 198 leukaemia registries in 53 countries shows general improvement but continuing large disparities (*Lancet Haematol* doi:10.1016/S2352-3026(17)30052-2). Five year survival for all lymphoid leukaemias in 2005-9 was 52.4% in Colombia and 91.6% in Germany. Within Europe alone, survival from acute myeloid leukaemia ranged from 33.3% in Bulgaria to 78.2% in German registries.

## Did privatisation speed death in Russia?

In the five years after the Soviet Union broke up, there are estimated to have been an extra 7 million premature deaths, 4 million in Russia alone. Men of working age made up the largest share of these deaths. A retrospective cohort study (*Lancet Public Health* doi:10.1016/S2468-2667(17)30072-5) attempts to compare age standardised mortality rates in Russian towns that privatised their health services rapidly with those where the process was more gradual. After adjusting for age, marital status, material deprivation history, smoking, drinking alcohol, and socioeconomic status, men of working age in quickly privatised towns experienced 13% higher mortality than in slowly privatised towns.

## Strokes in young Americans

While rates of cardiovascular disease in general have been falling in the USA, rates of stroke in the young have been rising. Hospitalisation rates for acute ischaemic stroke from 2003 to 2012 increased among men (41.5%) and women (30%) aged 35 to 44 years. This has coincided with a near doubling of the prevalence of three or more of five common stroke risk factors among both men and women aged 18 to 64 years hospitalised for ischaemic stroke.

(*JAMA Neurol* doi:10.1001/jamaneurol.2017.0020).

## Risk of uveitis in psoriasis

The whole-population database of Taiwan can be used to explore all sorts of disease associations, the latest being psoriasis and uveitis (*JAMA Ophthalmol* doi:10.1001/jamaophthalmol.2017.0569). A group with severe psoriasis with psoriatic arthritis had the greatest risk of incident uveitis compared with the non-psoriatic controls (adjusted hazard ratio 2.40). The group with severe psoriasis without psoriatic arthritis and the group with mild psoriasis with psoriatic arthritis also had an increased risk of incident uveitis (adjusted hazard ratio 1.42 for both groups). However, an increased risk for incident uveitis with mild psoriasis without psoriatic arthritis was statistically non-significant (adjusted hazard ratio 1.09; 95% confidence interval 1.00 to 1.20).

## Hearts and diets

Current controversies about diet and cardiovascular disease are reviewed in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* (*J Am Coll Cardiol* doi:10.1016/j.jacc.2017.03.006), which attempts to present the evidence in one central graphic. But alas, this fat and saturated territory is full of slippery places. Already there is a correction to the effect that “in the column entitled ‘Inconclusive evidence; for harm or benefit,’ Virgin coconut oil should have read Sunflower oil and other liquid vegetable oils.” Crucial.

## Shush, don't say it

In a trial addressing the question “Does the word ‘quiet’ really make things busier?” orthopaedic senior house officers were told by their registrar, “Have a quiet night. I’ll see you in the morning.” In the control group, the registrar said, “Have a good night. I’ll see you in the morning.” The mean number of night referrals leading to admissions was 3.1 (standard deviation 2.6) in the quiet arm and 1.7 (standard deviation 1.3) in the control arm. The difference in admissions between the groups was statistically significant ( $P=0.04$ ). This entertaining study was published on or near April 1. (*RCS Bulletin* 10.1308/rcsbull.2017.133)