



Seven days in medicine: 18-24 April 2018

Surgical mesh

MPs call for urgent ban on mesh implants

MPs asked the UK government to suspend all mesh implant operations and for the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) to bring forward from 2019 to 2018 its guidelines on using mesh in stress related urinary incontinence. Leading the debate in the House of Commons on 19 April, Emma Hardy, MP for Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle, also called for pelvic floor physiotherapy to be offered to all new mothers as standard on the NHS, as happens in France. (Full story doi:10.1136/bmj.k1758)

Organ transplants

Consider more organs from high infection risk donors, researchers say

The US epidemic of drug overdose deaths in recent years has corresponded with a large rise in use of donor organs from this group, and recipients' outcomes are not inferior to patients who received organs donated after trauma or medical death, the *Annals of Internal Medicine* reported. Concern about increased infection risk among donors who died from overdose leads to many organs being discarded, but use of more organs from infection risk donors, including donors infected with hepatitis C, should be considered given the numbers of patients on organ waiting lists, the authors said. They wrote, "Direct-acting antivirals are now widely available to cure [hepatitis C] infection, including in transplant recipients." (Full story doi:10.1136/bmj.k1720)

GP workforce

"Golden hello" scheme is expanded

The government expanded a scheme designed to support areas in England that struggle to recruit GP trainees. Places available on the scheme, which offers GP trainees a £20 000 (€22 900; \$27 800) salary supplement, will increase from 200 to 265 in 2018. The scheme's fill rate increased from 86% in 2016 to 92% in 2017. Steve Brine, health minister, said, "This will help boost GP levels in communities which have traditionally found it hard to recruit and ease the pressure on practices."

NHS complaints

Ombudsman investigations take too long

England's ombudsman services need modernising through legislation, said a report on the work of the Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman (PHSO) by the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee. The time taken to investigate complaints is "simply unacceptable," the

report said, adding that the PHSO must improve how it supports often very distressed complainants and show how its investigations help improve NHS services for future patients. The committee was "cautiously confident" that the PHSO is now on the right track under the new ombudsman, Rob Behrens, but the government needed to accelerate legislation to modernise the ombudsman, the report said.

Menstruation

Girls worried about periods don't talk to GP

Eight in 10 girls (79%) did not seek medical advice for menstrual symptoms they were concerned about, such as heavy or irregular bleeding and severe period pain, in a survey of 1004 girls and women aged 14-21 by the girls' rights charity Plan International UK. Embarrassment had deterred 27% from discussing their concerns with a doctor or health professional, and 8% said that only male doctors had been available and they had not felt comfortable talking to them.

Alcohol intake may be linked to PMS

Around one in 10 cases of premenstrual syndrome (PMS) may be associated with alcohol, a study published in *BMJ Open* found.¹ Several studies have shown that PMS tends to be more severe in women who drink alcohol, but it was not clear whether this is due to alcohol itself or to women reaching for the bottle to cope with their symptoms, so researchers identified 19 relevant studies and pooled data on the 47 000 participants. Alcohol was associated with a 45% higher risk of PMS and a 79% higher risk in heavy drinkers. In Europe alcohol is consumed by almost 60% of women and may be linked to around 21% of cases of PMS, the researchers said.

Hospital waits

Traffic light system will show length of waits

An e-traffic light system to make it easier for GPs in England to see hospital waiting times when discussing referral options with patients is being rolled out after a successful trial. The Capacity Alert system shows a red light against a hospital with longer waiting times and a green light against those with spare capacity, meaning that doctors can offer patients potentially quicker routes to treatment. Results from two trials in northeast and southwest London found that red lights cut referrals to overbooked hospitals by nearly 40% this winter, while green lights increased referrals to hospitals with available capacity by 14%.

Vaccines

WHO advises limiting dengue vaccine amid safety concerns

Sanofi Pasteur's vaccine against dengue fever should be used only by people already infected with the virus, subject to additional testing, the World Health Organization said. The recommendations were made in response to new data from Sanofi, which showed that its drug Dengvaxia, first approved by WHO in 2015, could increase the risk of severe dengue in people who had not previously been exposed to the virus. For any countries considering vaccination as part of their dengue control programme WHO recommended a "pre-vaccination screening strategy," in which only dengue seropositive people are vaccinated. The pre-screening process could be achieved by conventional serological testing for dengue virus to identify people who have had previous dengue infections, it said. (Full story doi:10.1136/bmj.k1765)

Criminal investigation into unauthorised herpes vaccine trial is launched

The US Food and Drug Administration launched a criminal investigation into a herpes vaccine trial carried out by a microbiologist who injected participants with his experimental live herpes simplex virus (HSV-2) vaccine in Illinois hotel rooms with no apparent safety oversight, consent forms, or ethics approval. The vaccine's creator, William Halford, of Southern Illinois University, who performed the injections, died last June, but Kaiser Health News reported that the drug agency's Office of Criminal Investigations is looking into whether anyone else from the university or from Halford's company, Rational Vaccines, broke laws or FDA rules in helping him. Emails from Halford to trial participants contained several references to an unnamed graduate student assisting him. (Full story doi:10.1136/bmj.k1763)

Genomic medicine

NHS risks missing out on genomic benefits, MPs warn

The advancement of genomic medicine in the NHS is being held back by delays in infrastructure development and reduced training budgets, a report by the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee warned. It added that public support for capitalising on the successes of the UK's landmark 100 000 Genomes Project could waver unless more is done to alleviate ethical concerns and to promote potential benefits. The report urged the government to invest in digital infrastructure to tackle challenges associated with collecting, analysing, and acting on genomic data and to provide funding for genomics training to be embedded in all relevant UK courses and medical revalidation. (Full story doi:10.1136/bmj.k1749)

NHS funding

NHS bill will rise £50bn by 2030

NHS funding will need to rise by £50bn (€57.2bn; \$69.6bn) by 2030, up from £123bn in 2017 to £173bn, said an analysis by the Institute for Public Policy Research for the Lord Darzi review of health and care, and adult social care will require an extra £10bn a year by 2030 to maintain the existing system. Even if both funding requirements are met the NHS will have to deliver productivity growth of 1.5 times its long run trend, requiring fundamental reform of the system, the analysis found.

1 Fernández MDM, Saulyte J, Inskip HM, Takkouche B. Premenstrual syndrome and alcohol consumption: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMJ Open* 2018;8:e019490. 10.1136/bmjopen-2017-019490 29661913

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