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EDITOR'S CHOICE

BMJ

Prince William hit the headlines recently when he suffered a depressed skull fracture after being hit accidentally with a golf club. A paper by three paediatricians from Newcastle shows that he is by no means alone: golf was the commonest cause in a series of childhood head injuries related to sport that necessitated admission to hospital (p 1505). The authors recommend supervision at all times for children playing with golf clubs. Another newsworthy finding reported this week is that smoking may delay the onset of familial Alzheimer's disease (p 1491): the genetics of this is explored on p 1478. There is at least a plausible biochemical explanation of the link between smoking and Alzheimer's disease, which seems at first a strange finding, but the explanation of why there should be such wide variation in outcome among over 600 patients operated on for colorectal cancer in Glasgow between 1974 and 1979 is less clear (p 1501).

There was wide variability in whether surgeons opted for curative operations, and the authors found a threefold variation in the hazard ratio among the surgeons. One way to improve surgical performance in diagnosing and treating acute abdominal pain is to use structured forms and direct computer feedback, and now Tim de Dombal and others have shown that equally good results can be achieved with computer aided teaching instead of direct computer feedback (p 1495). Finally, one of the most interesting discoveries in psychology in recent years has been groupthink, the process whereby groups make dreadful decisions because of collective avoidance or overoptimism. Ian Robertson reviews a book on the process that may explain appeasement of Hitler, Irangate, and the disastrous invasion of the Bay of Pigs (p 1548). Medicine, some would argue, is full of examples of groupthink at work.