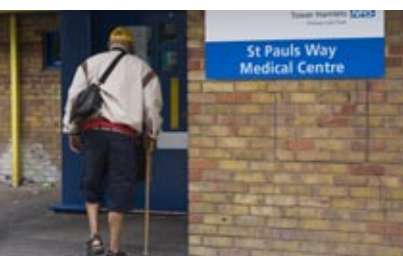




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Benefit depends on the setting, baseline infant mortality, and vitamin A deficiency, says James M Tielsch

» *Research*, p 1416

### 1386 Risk factors for gastroschisis

Genitourinary infection in early pregnancy can be added to the existing list, says Pierpaolo Mastroiacovo

» *Research*, p 1420

### 1387 Wheeze in preschool children

Exercise induced wheeze and atopic disorders predict persistent asthma, says George Russell

» *Research*, p 1423

### 1388 Preventing injury in childhood

Injury surveillance in the UK lags behind other European countries, say Graham Kirkwood and Allyson Pollock

### 1390 Health and wealth in Europe

European initiative seeks to spur action to tackle widening health divides, say David J Hunter and Tessa Richards

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One in four NHS trusts fail hygiene standards

### 1394 Woman allowed to clarify law on assisted suicide

EU launches plan to tackle mental illness

Dutch doctors make suicide advice public

Psychiatrist admits plagiarism, denies dishonesty

### 1395 Regulation of alternative medicine faces delays

### 1396 European drug makers do most for poor countries

Research organisations target neglected diseases

### 1397 Many Ethiopian children need therapeutic feeding

World food aid plummets as prices soar

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Compromise may be reached on records system

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Ray Moynihan examines the role of the influential experts paid by industry to help "educate" the profession and the public

### 1406 Private practice

Contracts to allow general practices to be run by private companies were supposed to be a last resort, but is this really the case? Andrew Cole reports

## HEAD TO HEAD

### 1404 Should the drug industry use key opinion leaders?

Industry commonly works with experts to put across its message. Charlie Buckwell says this interaction is essential for medical advancement, but Giovanni Fava argues that it threatens scientific integrity

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Tessa Richards

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Funding the NHS solely through taxation has led to tensions throughout its history. But, as Tony Delamothe reports in his fourth article on the NHS, it still looks like the most efficient option

### 1413 Reasons or excuses for avoiding meta-analysis in forest plots

Heterogeneous data are a common problem in meta-analysis. John Ioannidis, Nikolaos Patsopoulos, and Hannah Rothstein show that final synthesis is possible and desirable in most cases

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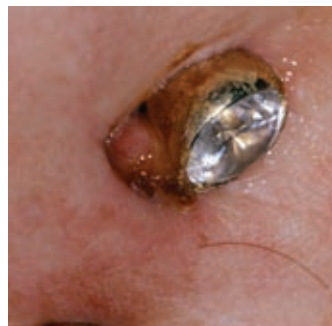
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Patients lost in bureaucracy, p 1438

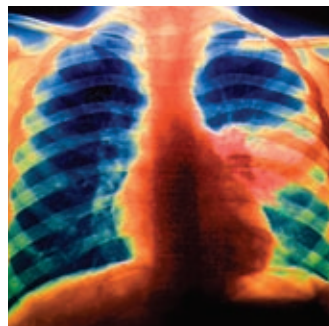




Self reported genitourinary infections and risk of gastroschisis, p 1420



Body piercing in England, p 1426



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## RESEARCH

### 1416 Effect of 50 000 IU vitamin A given with BCG vaccine on mortality in infants in Guinea-Bissau: randomised placebo controlled trial

Vitamin A supplementation reduces mortality in older children, but a global recommendation of high dose supplementation for all newborn infants may not contribute to better survival

Christine Stabell Benn, Birgitte Rode Diness, Adam Roth, Ernesto Nante, Ane Bærent Fisker, Ida Maria Lisse, Maria Yazdanbakhsh, Hilton Whittle, Amabelia Rodrigues, Peter Aaby

**>> Editorial p 1385**

### 1420 Case-control study of self reported genitourinary infections and risk of gastroschisis: findings from the national birth defects prevention study, 1997-2003

This rare abnormality, commonest among babies of teenage mothers, is increasing: this US study found a significant association with self reported infections in early pregnancy

Marcia L Feldkamp, Jennita Reefhuis, James Kucik, Sergey Krikov, Andy Wilson, Cynthia A Moore, John C Carey, Lorenzo D Botto

**>> Editorial p 1386**

### 1423 Long term prognosis in preschool children with wheeze: longitudinal postal questionnaire study 1993-2004

In more than 600 children aged less than five two predictive factors (baseline parent reported exercise induced wheeze and a history of atopy) indicated a likelihood of 53.2% of developing asthma in early adolescence

Peter I Frank, Julie A Morris, Michelle L Hazell, Mary F Linehan, Timothy L Frank

**>> Editorial p 1387**

### 1426 Body piercing in England: a survey of piercing at sites other than earlobe

In this national household survey of more than 10 000 adults one in 10 had such a piercing and among 16-24 year old about a third had related health problems

Angie Bone, Fortune Ncube, Tom Nichols, Norman D Noah

## CLINICAL REVIEW

### 1429 Recent changes in the management of community acquired pneumonia in adults

Hannah J Durrington, Charlotte Summers

## PRACTICE

### 1434 Rational imaging: Endovascular stenting to treat obstruction of the superior vena cava

This article discusses the use of image guided endovascular stenting to treat obstruction of the superior vena cava

Anthony F Watkinson, Tow Non Yeow, Clementine Fraser

## RESEARCH PUBLISHED AHEAD OF PRINT

### Seroprotection against serogroup C meningococcal disease in adolescents in the United Kingdom: observational study

BMJ, doi:10.1136/bmj.39563.545255.AE

M D Snape, D F Kelly, S Lewis, C Banner, L Kibwana, C E Moore, L Diggle, T John, L M Yu, R Borrow, A Borkowski, C Nau, A J Pollard

## CARBON REDUCTION AND HEALTH

### A guide to reducing the footprint of the health sector

A joint meeting organised by the **BMJ**, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, and Faculty of Public Health

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Aaron Barham on 020 7092 6105 [aaron.barham@rcpch.ac.uk](mailto:aaron.barham@rcpch.ac.uk)





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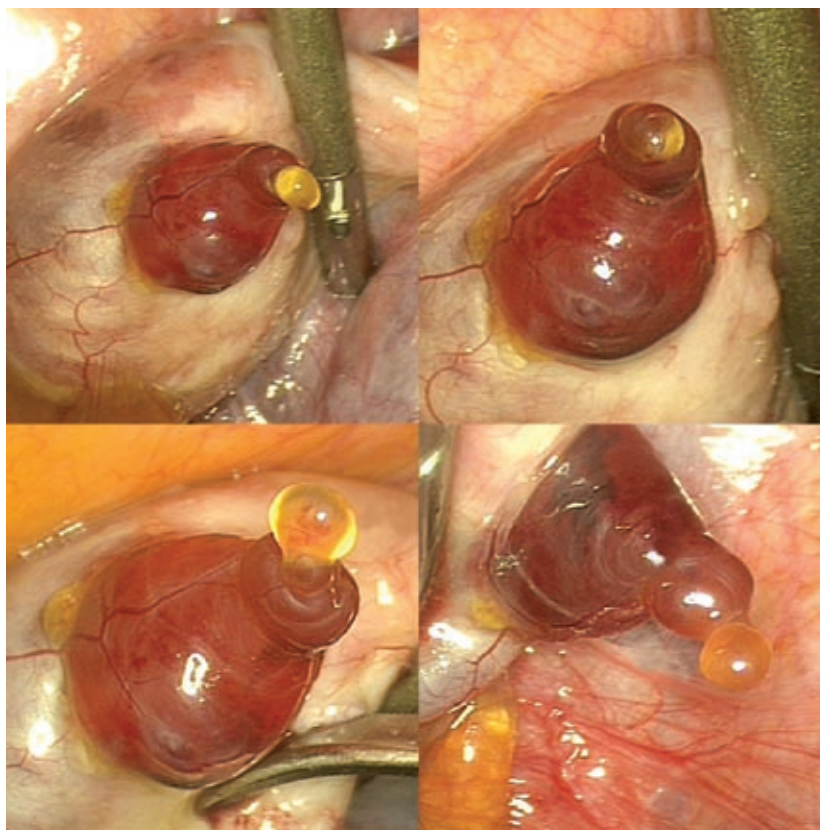
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NEW SCIENTIST/JACQUES DONNEZ

## PICTURE OF THE WEEK

Human ovulation was captured by chance during preparation for a routine partial hysterectomy in a 45 year old Belgian woman. The egg, the size of a full stop and surrounded by support cells, took 15 minutes to be released from a mature follicle on the ovary.

## THE WEEK IN NUMBERS

**1 in 3** Risk of complications in women aged 16-24 who have a body piercing other than in the earlobe (Research p 1426)

**75%** Cases in a study of community acquired pneumonia in which microbial diagnosis was made; in everyday practice this falls to 20% (Clinical Review p 1429)

**\$400** Hourly fee for the advice of an influential doctor (Feature p 1402)

**8.3%** Fraction of GDP spent on the UK health service in 2005; the US spent 15.3%, France 11.1%, and Germany 10.3% (Analysis p 1410)

**2.7** Ratio of neonatal mortality rates between worst (4.8) and best (1.8) performing English regions (News p 1393)

## THE WEEK IN QUOTES

**“Exercise induced wheeze and a history of atopic disorders in preschool children are significant predictors of future asthma”** (Research p 1423)

**“Arguably, the quality of a patient’s journey matters as much as where it takes them”** (Observations p 1408)

**“A percutaneous stent is the quickest way to relieve symptoms [of] superior vena cava obstruction secondary to malignancy”** (Practice p 1434)

**“Practitioners [of traditional therapies] should have an honours degree or masters degree to gain registration”** (News p 1395)

**“If the patient isn’t dead you can always make them worse”** (Medical Classics p 1441)

## EDITOR'S CHOICE

## Key opinion leaders, your time is up



Feature p 1402  
Head to head p 1404

Cover shows a marionette purchased by the *BMJ* from [czechmarionettes.com](http://czechmarionettes.com)

We're lucky in medicine to have an unending supply of mysteries to ponder. Some of these—like why vitamin A supplementation benefits some children while harming others—are amenable to scientific research (p 1385, p 1416). But there are mysteries of a different sort, ones that are in our power as a profession to resolve. Why, for example, is it considered normal for medical leaders to accept personal payment for promoting a company's drug or device?

This week Ray Moynihan asks whether paid "key opinion leaders" can be independent or are just drug representatives in disguise (p 1402). His interview with former sales representative Kimberly Elliott suggests the latter. We know from independent studies that paid opinion leaders can increase use of a target drug or device. Even if we didn't know this, we would have to assume it from industry's continued funding of "KOLs." Speakers who don't make enough impact on drug sales are dropped, says Elliott.

Perhaps most troubling is the way industry grooms potential opinion leaders. Quoting from the magazine *Pharmaceutical Marketing*, Moynihan says that industry staff are told to find doctors who will endorse their products "who may be further down the influence ladder," and then help "raise their profile, and so develop them into opinion leaders."

Of course industry is doing nothing illegal, and it employs many fine people motivated more by improving health care than making a profit. In this week's Head to Head, Charlie Buckwell argues that industry has an ethical obligation to work with influential health professionals so that each side understands the other's thinking (p 1404). The fact

that these interactions can affect clinical practice is not necessarily bad, he says, since this can help doctors appreciate the benefits of some drugs.

But is this the best way to inform doctors? What of evidence based medicine, which asks us to use information that has been gathered systematically and evaluated objectively? Moynihan also spoke to Richard Tiner of the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry, who said that key opinion leaders are "free to speak about other medicines" and their presentations are "often quite balanced." Surely doctors should be setting their sights higher than this?

Buckwell argues for tighter rules and role definitions, and there are signs that things are improving. It's now rare in the best forums that speakers fail to start with a slide declaring their conflicts of interest. But how often do these declarations tell the full story? Have you ever heard speakers say that they were paid an honorarium and travel expenses and that the sponsor prepared their slides?

Such transparency is crucial if we are to understand the full extent of the influences we are under. But can we look ahead to something even better, to an era of truly independent medical leadership? Giovanni Fava thinks we can and should (p 1405). He envisages "a reservoir of truly independent experts" and calls for an end to "business disguised as science." Medicine sorely needs leaders, but not if they've been bought.

**Fiona Godlee, editor, *BMJ* [fgodlee@bmj.com](mailto:fgodlee@bmj.com)**

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## PLUS

Career Focus, jobs, and courses appear after p 1442.

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