



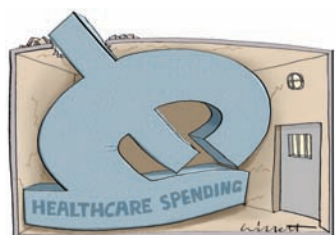
Cutting deaths from accidental injury, p 1371



The elimination of lymphatic filariasis, p 1374



A medical classic by Evelyn Waugh, p 1422



Should there be a ceiling on what percentage of GDP countries spend on health? p 1382

EDITORIALS

- 1361 Treatment of irritable bowel syndrome in primary care**
Ispaghula, antispasmodics, and peppermint oil should be considered, says Roger Jones
» *Research*, p 1388
- 1362 Cardiovascular disease and cancer in very old age**
Risk seems to plateau, but other causes of death are poorly defined, says Timo E Strandberg
» *Research*, p 1400
- 1363 How should health be defined?**
Alejandro R Jadad and Laura O'Grady invite you to Join a global conversation at <http://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2008/12/05/alex-jadad-on-defining-health/>
- 1364 Cryotherapy and high intensity focused ultrasound for prostate cancer**
More evidence is needed before they can be recommended for widespread use, say Fergus Macbeth, Nathan Bromham, and Robert Kagan
- 1366 Trading regulations and health foods**
New legislation requires evidence for marketed health foods, says M E J Lean

LETTERS

- 1367 Regulation's threat to research**
- 1368 JUPITER study; QOFing whine**
- 1369 Copying letters to patients**
- 1370 National obesity strategy; Bailey and Love; Flu vaccine in over 65s; 10 minutes on memory problems**

NEWS

- 1371 Gang members from Glasgow offered way out of violent lifestyle**
Simple measures could cut deaths from accidental injury
- 1372 A 60th birthday present for the NHS from children's laureate**
Parents not to be prosecuted over son's suicide
Patients take £7.6m a month out of NHS as they choose private sector treatment
- 1373 Health bill will oblige staff to take account of NHS constitution setting out core principles**
- 1374 Lymphatic filariasis eliminated in 16 countries**
Abortion does not cause mental health problems
Experts agree how to ensure proper use of stem cell therapy
Zimbabwe appeals for medical aid as cholera epidemic worsens
- 1376 A chance of life**
The surgeon David Nott, a Christian who does regular voluntary work abroad, made headlines last week when he recounted how he used instructions sent by text message to do an amputation

SHORT CUTS

- 1378 What's new in the other general journals**

FEATURES

- 1380 Research funding goes metric**
As UK researchers wait to find out what they will have to spend over the next five years, Geoff Watts assesses the system for allocating funds and how it will work in future

HEAD TO HEAD

- 1382 Should there be a ceiling on what percentage of GDP countries spend on health?**
Nick Bosanquet says yes; Werner Christie says no

OBSERVATIONS

ONLY CONNECT

- 1384 This allergies hysteria is just nuts**
Nicholas A Christakis

ANALYSIS

- 1385 Fairness of financial penalties to improve control of *Clostridium difficile***
Trusts in England have been given targets to reduce *C difficile* infection rates. But Sarah Walker and colleagues argue that the way they are calculated makes financial penalties almost impossible to avoid

RESEARCH, CLINICAL REVIEW, AND PRACTICE

See next page

OBITUARIES

- 1417 George Emil Palade; Edmund Howarth; Roger Youdell Jones; Maurice Hirsh Oelbaum; Eldred Wright Walls; Margaret Mary Whitty; Philip Arthur Wilkinson**

VIEWS AND REVIEWS

PERSONAL VIEW

- 1419 An unusual day in court**
Peter D Donnelly, Jackie Tombs

COLUMNISTS

- 1420 The dumping ground** Des Spence
Selecting the next generation Trisha Greenhalgh
1421 A fundamental question Theodore Dalrymple

MEDICAL CLASSICS

- 1421 The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold**
Alexandra Pitman

REVIEW OF THE WEEK

- 1422 Trust Me, I'm (Still) a Doctor**
Richard Smith

ENDGAMES

- 1423 Case report; Statistical question; Prize quiz; Picture quiz**

MINERVA

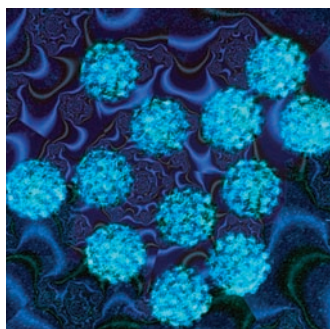
- 1424 Differences in the development of fibroids in black and white women, and other stories**

NHS consults on ethical buying, p 1372





Treating irritable bowel syndrome, p 1388



Hypersensitivity reactions to HPV vaccine in Australian schoolgirls, p 1392



Managing health problems in people with intellectual disabilities, p 1408



Prescribing diuretics for patients with prediabetes and hypertension, p 1415

RESEARCH

1388 Effect of fibre, antispasmodics, and peppermint oil in the treatment of irritable bowel syndrome: systematic review and meta-analysis

The number needed to treat to prevent one patient having persistent symptoms was 11 for fibre, 5 for antispasmodics, and 2.5 for peppermint oil and, although adverse events were significantly more frequent in those receiving antispasmodics than placebo, they were not serious

Alexander C Ford, Nicholas J Talley, Brennan M R Spiegel, Amy E Foxx-Orenstein, Lawrence Schiller, Eamonn M M Quigley, Paul Moayyedi

» Editorial p 1361

1392 Hypersensitivity reactions to human papillomavirus vaccine in Australian schoolgirls: retrospective cohort study

More than 380 000 doses of the quadrivalent vaccine were given in schools in Victoria and South Australia in 2007 and, of 25 girls investigated for suspected hypersensitivity, three were probably truly hypersensitive

Liew Woei Kang, Nigel Crawford, Mimi L K Tang, Jim Buttery, Jenny Royle, Michael Gold, Christine Ziegler, Patrick Quinn, Sonja Elia, Sharon Choo

1396 Effects of algorithm for diagnosis of active labour: cluster randomised trial

Despite suggestions that better differentiation between latent and active labour would cut the rate of medical intervention, this algorithm for midwives in Scottish maternity units did not reduce the use of oxytocin to hasten labour in primiparous women

Helen Cheyne, Vanora Hundley, Dawn Dowding, J Martin Bland, Paul McNamee, Ian Greer, Maggie Styles, Carol A Barnett, Graham Scotland, Catherine Niven

1400 Incidence of cardiovascular disease and cancer in advanced age: prospective cohort study

In 22 000 male doctors aged 40-84 who were healthy in 1982 the incidence of major cardiovascular disease increased exponentially throughout life but was often undetected till death, while the incidence of cancer peaked at age 80-90 and then fell

Jane A Driver, Luc Djoussé, Giancarlo Logroscino, J Michael Gaziano, Tobias Kurth

» Editorial p 1362

1404 Discrepancies in sample size calculations and data analyses reported in randomised trials: comparison of publications with protocols

Most trials approved in 1994-95 in Denmark had important statistical discrepancies between protocols and publications: only 16% of papers allowed full assessment of the trials' reliability

An-Wen Chan, Asbjørn Hróbjartsson, Karsten J Jørgensen, Peter C Gøtzsche, Douglas G Altman

CLINICAL REVIEW

1408 Managing health problems in people with intellectual disabilities

Henny M J van Schrojenstein Lantman-de Valk, Patricia Noonan Walsh

PRACTICE

1413 A patient's journey: The last wish of a patient with end stage chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

At her explicit request, euthanasia allowed a 55 year old woman in the Netherlands with end stage chronic obstructive pulmonary disease to end her life

Daisy J A Janssen, Ton P G Alsemgeest, Guy A M Widdershoven, Emiel F M Wouters, Jos M G A Schols, Martijn A Spruit

1415 Uncertainties page: Should we prescribe diuretics for patients with prediabetes and hypertension?

This article is one in a series of occasional articles that highlights areas of practice where management lacks convincing supporting evidence

Bruce Arroll, Timothy Kenealy, C Raina Elley

RESEARCH PUBLISHED ONLINE

Dynamic spread of happiness in a large social network: longitudinal analysis over 20 years in the Framingham Heart Study

BMJ, doi:10.1136/bmj.a2338

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PICTURE OF THE WEEK

A pistol, specifically designed for use by older people, disabled people, or others who may be at a physical disadvantage with potential attackers, is being offered for sale in the United States.

The developer, Constitutional Arms, says that it is seeking to obtain medical equipment coding from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services for the pistol. If successful, it is possible the medically prescribed purchase of the gun could be reimbursed by Medicare or private health insurance companies. It describes the medical purpose of the gun as extension of life expectancy and "prevention of sudden onset death." See News on bmj.com (doi: 10.1136/bmj.a2945) and Observations, p 1384

THE WEEK IN NUMBERS

\$35bn Amount spent in 2000 in the US on weight loss products
(Editorial, p 1366)

73 Number of murders reported in Strathclyde in the past year (News, p 1371)

\$3000 Estimated amount per head spent on health by most developed countries, apart from the US
(Head to head, p 1382)

2.5 Number needed to treat with peppermint oil to prevent one patient having persistent symptoms of IBS
(Research, p 1388)

0.7% Prevalence of intellectual disability in the Netherlands
(Clinical Review, p 1408)

THE WEEK IN QUOTES

"Divide all muscles attached to scapula. Stop muscle bleeding with cont suture. Easy! Good luck."
(News, p 1376)

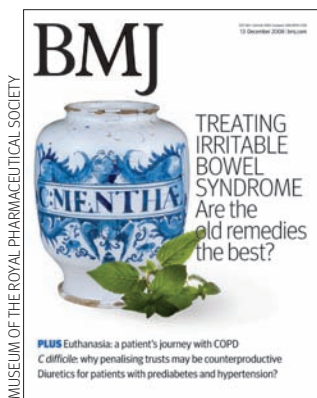
"There are no doubt thousands of parents who rid their cupboards of peanut butter but not of guns"
(Observations, p 1384)

"When described, methodological information in journal publications is often discrepant with information in trial protocols" (Research, p 1404)

"On the morning that euthanasia was carried out we went for her last cigarette together. It hurt me to see how much effort it took to smoke just a little bit of this cigarette" (Practice, p 1413)

EDITOR'S CHOICE

It's time to change how Europe regulates research



ON THE COVER

Sprig of peppermint leaves and an 18th century jar for storing conserve of mint

Editorial, p 1361

Research, p 1388

So were they right, the UK academics who six weeks ago wrote that regulation was “the real threat to research”? (*BMJ* 2008;337:a1732). If the *BMJ*'s rapid responses are a reliable guide, yes they were. This week's letters pages host a selection of these responses, each vying with the next to show, in the words of surgical trainee David Samuel, “how prohibitive, laborious, and bureaucratic attempting to conduct research has become” (p 1367). Can anyone beat my delays? asks Martyn Parker, whose randomised trial was eventually approved after a delay of over two and a half years. Further responses are welcome if anyone wants to try.

It's not only researchers who suffer the consequences, says patient representative Christine Gratus. “The pursuit of patient confidentiality, often by patient representatives, is almost obsessive and can be in no one's interests, particularly patients,” she writes (p 1367). Bonnie Sibbald from the NHS research network in Manchester reports idiocies that would be funny if they weren't so costly in terms of researchers' and administrators' time. Richard Holt, a senior academic in Southampton, worries that young researchers are being put off research as a career. “My last three grants have taken more than a year from award to full approval,” he writes, “leading to the embarrassing situation of the first year's annual report in which our achievements are listed as ‘ethics and R&D approval obtained.’”

Hugh Davies from the UK's National Research Ethics Service lists several initiatives that may or may not impress frustrated researchers and patients (p 1368). The most substantial is the integrated research application system (IRAS), which when fully operational will be a one stop shop for applications

to funders and regulatory bodies, including the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency. However, these bodies will need to raise their game if things are to improve substantially. At a gathering of UK research ethics committees last week, Iain Chalmers, one of the founders of the Cochrane Collaboration, said (not for the first time) that ethics committees and other regulators had failed patients on a massive scale by acquiescing in unnecessary research, obstructing necessary research, failing to require public registration of clinical trials, and not pressing for full publication of research results.

The EU Clinical Trials Directive must take some blame. Set up in 2004 to improve the quality and safety of trials and to harmonise and simplify application processes across Europe, it has been heavily criticised by industry and academics alike. In their letter, Cascorbi and colleagues report that, although long delays are mainly a UK phenomenon, approval times are generally longer in countries that follow the directive than in those that don't.

The European Commission is listening, writes *BMJ* deputy editor Trish Groves in her blog from a meeting in Brussels earlier this month (<http://blogs.bmj.com/bmj>). One proposal is to simplify the directive and make it mandatory. As a first step, regulators have agreed to pilot a single Europe-wide application process. But things will need to move fast. While we dally, careers are being blighted, patients' lives are being wasted, and important research that could be done in the UK and Europe is moving elsewhere.

Fiona Godlee, editor, *BMJ* fgodlee@bmj.com

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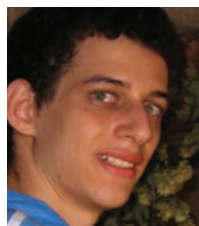


Career Focus on specialist training, plus jobs and courses after p 1422

WHAT'S NEW ON BMJ.COM

LATEST BLOGS

"Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." This is the World Health Organization's definition of health, and Alex Jadad and Laura O'Grady are marking WHO's 60th anniversary with an editorial and a blog on this definition. They are inviting anyone connected to the internet, anywhere in the world, to contribute to a global conversation on the topic. Let us know what you think by submitting a comment.



Medical student Ohad Oren ponders the deaths of two Israeli soldiers and the war with Lebanon and finds that doctors should learn from the optimistic attitude displayed by the soldiers' families, or even the entire country: "You will typically hear a surgeon proclaiming that he or she is to operate on six breast cancer patients. Imagine the same surgeon declaring: 'Today I will fight for the lives of half a dozen patients.' The patients will feel reassured; the doctors will experience an authentic urge to perform their best; and the clouds of pessimistic medical prognoses will dissipate."

Paediatrician Heather Payne warned of a "media orgy of blaming professionals" in the wake of the Baby P case. Her blog has been rated 10 out of 10 by scoring system PostRank (www.postrank.com). This means it received top scores on the system's five Cs of engagement: creating, critiqueing, chatting, collecting, clicking.

Join these debates and others at <http://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/>

MOST READ

Dynamic spread of happiness in a large social network
Happiness, social networks, and health

Impact of a new national screening policy for Down's syndrome in Denmark

Doctor is cleared of manslaughter for prescribing penicillin to man who said he was allergic
Sleep disorder (insomnia)



MOST COMMENTED ON

Life is for living

Incremental prognostic value of the exercise electrocardiogram in the initial assessment of patients with suspected angina: cohort study

Health secretary asks commission to look into role of four NHS trusts in Baby P case

Who's watching the watchdogs?

AIDS and the irrational

LATEST RESEARCH

Structured warm-up exercises may prevent up to half of severe sports injuries

A comprehensive warm-up programme designed to improve strength, awareness, and neuromuscular control can prevent injuries in young female footballers, say the authors of this cluster randomised controlled trial from Norway. Two British sports scientists agree in an accompanying editorial that such a programme can reduce injury, and should be recommended at all levels of participation.

To read these and other recent research papers, go to bmj.com/channels/research.dtl



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Last week's poll asked:

Would you advise a friend or relative to become a doctor?

You replied:

YES 461 votes **(52%)**

NO 420 votes **(48%)**

This week's poll asks:

Should doctors encourage patients to make decisions about their future care in case incapacity strikes?

Let us know where you stand on this issue at www.bmj.com/#poll

Too much information and not enough time?

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