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Is related to the underlying appendicitis, not the operation, say Antje Timmer and Florian Obermeier
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- 782 Screening for type 2 diabetes in primary care**
The QDScore is a useful computer based screening tool, say Peter E H Schwarz, Jiang Li and Stefan R Bornstein
» *Research*, p 812
- 783 Measuring the quality of hospital care**
Should focus on effective learning and improvement rather than judgment, say John Wright and Kaveh G Shojania
» *Research*, p 817
- 784 Reducing harm from alcohol**
The UK must tackle the problem of cheap alcohol, say Martin McKee, Paul Belcher and Tamara Hervey
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Guidelines exist for diagnosis, but long term studies of treatment are needed, says T Hugh Jones

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- 788 MRSA screening; Diagnosis of heart failure; Don't turn old people into patients**

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- 789 Researchers fear that EU draft directive on animal research will reduce experimentation**
Government must give guidance on care of failed asylum seekers
- 790 JAMA's new rule on whistleblowers' silence during investigations creates controversy**
Plaque honours pioneers in holistic care
Five yearly checks for over 40s will save 650 lives a year, says government
- 791 UK doctors' attitude to assisted dying differs from the public's**
- 792 Scottish NHS offers cash for groceries to get smokers to quit**
Patients can now sue and complain about NHS at the same time
Experts call for a global fund for family planning
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Mental health services must tackle age discrimination
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Replacing health services lost in Darfur could take two years

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- 804 Patients and the public deserve big changes in evaluation of drugs** Silvio Garattini and Iain Chalmers argue that ending the secrecy surrounding drug trials would benefit all parties
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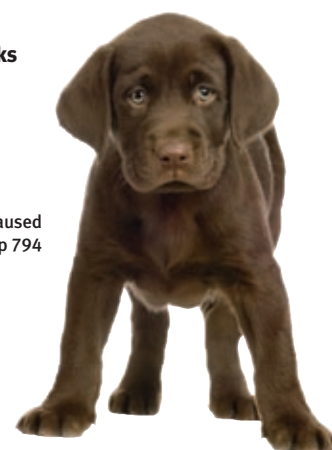
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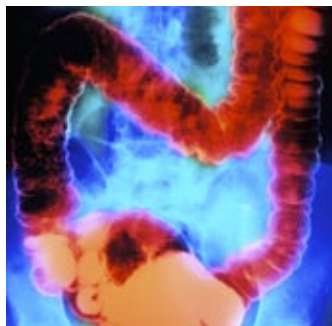
- 840 Teenage brains and other stories**

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- 826 Endpiece: Forty winks**
832 Epitaph

CDC quantifies injuries caused by tripping over pets, p 794





Ulcerative colitis, pp 781, 808



Studies using medical records, p 822



Hirsutism, p 823



Pregnancy and alcohol misuse, p 829

RESEARCH

808 Appendicitis, mesenteric lymphadenitis, and subsequent risk of ulcerative colitis: cohort studies in Sweden and Denmark

Observational studies consistently link appendectomy with a reduced risk of ulcerative colitis. It's the underlying pathology of appendicitis, not the surgery, that confers protection, according to this cohort study of over 700 000 patients

Morten Frisch, Bo V Pedersen, Roland E Andersson

>> Editorial p 781

812 Predicting risk of type 2 diabetes in England and Wales: prospective derivation and validation of QDScore

This score for 10 year risk of diabetes includes social deprivation and ethnicity and is easily assessed by doctors, patients, and the public online

Julia Hippisley-Cox, Carol Coupland, John Robson, Aziz Sheikh, Peter Brindle

>> Editorial p 782

817 Evidence of methodological bias in hospital standardised mortality ratios: retrospective database study of English hospitals

Standardised mortality ratios, adjusted for case mix, are a widely used indicator of hospital performance, but results of this retrospective analysis of routinely collected data from four English hospitals suggest that current methods used to adjust for case mix can be seriously misleading

Mohammed A Mohammed, Jonathan J Deeks, Alan Girling, Gavin Rudge, Martin Carmalt, Andrew J Stevens, Richard J Lilford

>> Editorial p 783

821 Migraines during pregnancy linked to stroke and vascular diseases: US population based case-control study

pico

Peripartum migraine is associated with other vascular diagnoses during and after pregnancy, including stroke and heart attack, but causation was impossible to establish in this observational study of more than 18 million women discharged from US hospitals with pregnancy related conditions

Cheryl D Bushnell, Margaret Jamison, Andra H James

822 Written informed consent and selection bias in observational studies using medical records: systematic review

pico

Only 67% of over 160 000 patients in this review gave permission for authors to use their medical records for research, so selection bias is likely in studies that require consent

Michelle E Kho, Mark Duffett, Donald J Willison, Deborah J Cook, Melissa C Brouwers

CLINICAL REVIEW

823 Management of hirsutism

Olympia Koulouri, Gerard S Conway

PRACTICE

827 Uncertainties page:

What is the most effective management of neurogenic bladder dysfunction?

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

Brian Buckley, Adrian M Grant

829 Pregnancy plus:

Pregnancy and alcohol misuse

This is one of a series of occasional articles about how to manage a pre-existing medical condition during pregnancy

Irene Guerrini, Siobhan Jackson, Francis Keaney

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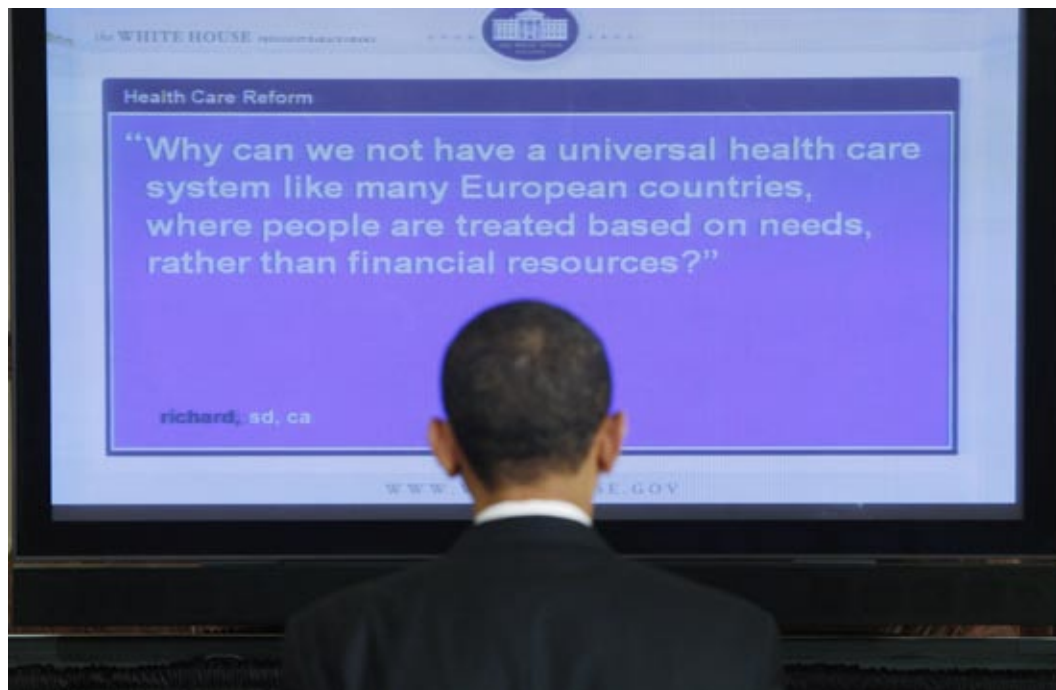
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REUTERS/JIM YOUNG

PICTURE OF THE WEEK

President Barack Obama answers questions submitted by members of the public in an "Internet Town Hall" session, streamed live on the White House website. The topic was the economy, and healthcare reform was among the subjects addressed. See www.whitehouse.gov/openforquestions.

THE WEEK IN NUMBERS

£25m Predicted saving in English healthcare costs per year from alcohol control measures recently proposed (Editorials, p 784)

650 000 People currently without access to full health care in Darfur (News, p 795)

185 Prevalence of migraine discharge codes per 100 000 deliveries among pregnant women discharged from US hospitals (Research, p 821)

25% Average increase in risk of spontaneous abortion per additional ounce of absolute alcohol consumed per day during pregnancy (Practice, p 829)

THE WEEK IN QUOTES

"The desire to avoid mislabelling hospitals cannot always trump the pursuit of useful measures of healthcare quality" (Editorials, p 783)

"It is appalling that the US has the highest rate of teen pregnancy among the most developed countries in the world. Approximately 750 000 teens will get pregnant this year" (News, p 794)

"Appendicitis and mesenteric lymphadenitis during childhood or adolescence are linked to a significantly reduced risk of ulcerative colitis in adulthood" (Research, p 808)

"Unwanted hair growth can have a similar effect on quality of life scores to that of asthma, epilepsy, and diabetes" (Clinical Review, p 823)

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Measuring quality



MARK THOMAS
Editorial, p 781
Research, p 808

"How long does it take the international healthcare system to kill 500 people?" asked Ross Wilson at the Quality Forum in Berlin two weeks ago (you can watch the video of his talk, and others, at <http://internationalforum.bmj.com>). His point was that we just don't know. The global airline industry is able to say how many passengers die each year (500 in 2008) and why. By comparison, health care is flying blind.

Part of the problem is that we can't agree on which data to collect or how to interpret them. This week Mohammed Mohammed and colleagues (p 817) report their analysis of hospital standardised mortality ratios (HSMRs) in the West Midlands. They looked at two variables—co-morbidity and emergency admissions—used to adjust the ratios for differences in case mix at different hospitals. They say these variables can be affected by systematic differences in how hospitals code patients or decide which emergencies to admit, and so they question claims that HSMRs reflect differences in quality of care.

The HSMR was developed at the Doctor Foster Unit at Imperial College. From there Paul Aylin and colleagues challenge the authors' conclusions in two rapid responses (http://www.bmj.com/cgi/eletters/338/mar18_2/b780). In a third response, Chris Sherlaw-Johnson and colleagues from the Healthcare Commission, which last week severely criticised the care at a hospital in the West Midlands (*BMJ* 2009;338:b1207), say they don't use HSMRs to trigger their investigations. Instead they use a range of mortality data.

Confused readers may find help in John Wright and Kaveh G Shojania's editorial (p 783). Rather

than championing one metric over another or reverting to "measurement nihilism," they think we should explore a range of indicators. These should not be used for comparing one hospital with another but for measuring progress in individual hospitals over time. I hope others will now join this debate on *bmj.com*.

Also awaiting your comments are Silvio Garattini and Iain Chalmers (p 804). They present four ways in which drug trials could be more beneficial for patients and the public: involving patients in shaping the research agenda; legally enforcing transparency in drug trials; putting more money into non-industry trials (perhaps by a 5% tax on drug marketing as now happens in Italy); and insisting that new drugs are shown to be better than existing ones.

In a linked commentary (p 806), Michael Tremblay questions the wisdom of following the Italian model, dependent as it is on advertising budgets, which may decrease. Both sets of authors agree that we should be looking for better returns on the public investment in drug research. Garattini and Chalmers think the way to achieve this is greater openness, and from the example they give of a frustrated contract researcher doing phase II studies on new drugs that have failed phase I trials, they are probably right. I am particularly struck by their proposal that the European Medicines Evaluation Agency should move from its current home in the EU directorate for enterprise and industry into the directorate for health and consumer affairs.

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

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New and updated reviews from *Clinical Evidence*

Recent updates to the website include anorexia nervosa, trigeminal neuralgia and a new review on brain metastases clinicalevidence.bmj.com



PLUS

Career Focus, jobs, and courses appear after p 838.

WHAT'S NEW ON BMJ.COM

LATEST BLOGS

Richard Lehman (pictured right) is back. The Oxford GP's weekly journal watch blog is returning to *BMJ* after an 18 month break. This week he gets off to a splendid start by covering a range of subjects from Greek nymphs to footstools and defecating.

And, after blogging about atheism and masculinity, Joe Collier turns his attention to getting older and his heroes Nelson Mandela and Bertrand Russell. Why do some older people appeal to students, young adults and the media, while others were dismissed as "old and grey?" What gives them immediacy and relevance?

Finally, in the wake of a damning Healthcare Commission report into Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust, emergency medicine consultant Chris Turner blogs about life in the eye of a media storm.

You can read these and other blogs at <http://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/>



Last week's poll asked:

Should people at risk of reinfarction have defibrillators available at home?

No 40 (51%)

Yes 39 (49%)

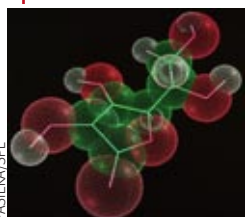
Polls on *bmj.com* are taking a break for a while. We will let you know when they return.

LATEST RESEARCH

Neonatal vitamin A for prevention of mortality and morbidity in infancy

There is no convincing evidence of either good or bad effects of neonatal supplementation with vitamin A, says this systematic review of randomised controlled trials. Consequently there is no justification for initiating such supplementation as a public health intervention in developing countries for reducing infant mortality and morbidity.

Access this and other research papers at www.bmj.com/channels/research.dtl



LATEST VIDEO

Reza Malekzadeh and other authors talk about their population based case-control study into the effect of tea drinking and oesophageal cancer in Golestan province, northern Iran. Will their findings detract from the time honoured ritual of drinking tea?

You can watch the video on *bmj.com*, or view it on *BMJ's* YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/bmjmedia



MOST COMMENTED ON

Diagnosis and treatment of primary hypothyroidism

What's your carbon reduction strategy?

Larval therapy for leg ulcers (VenUS II): randomised controlled trial

Management of depression in UK general practice in relation to scores on depression severity questionnaires: analysis of medical record data

High court rejects challenge to NICE guidelines on chronic fatigue syndrome

MOST READ

Tea drinking habits and oesophageal cancer in a high risk area in northern Iran: population based case-control study

Chronic constipation in adults

Larval therapy for leg ulcers (VenUS II): randomised controlled trial

Predicting risk of type 2 diabetes in England and Wales: prospective derivation and validation of QDScore

Treatment of depression in primary care



LATEST PODCASTS

In this week's podcast, Chris Ham, Professor of Health Policy and Management at the Health Services Management Centre, Birmingham, talks about government reforms to increase the choices available to patients, and to stimulate competition between healthcare providers. Will the planned changes result in underused capacity in some areas, and difficulties in attracting new providers into others? In last week's podcast, *BMJ* deputy editor Trish Groves talked to Dr Kate Venables, from Oxford University, about her investigation into the long term health of the veterans of Britain's chemical weapons research facility, Porton Down.

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