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Teenager who died after HPV vaccine had a chest tumour  
Coroner rules that treating 26 year old woman who wanted to die would have been unlawful
- 825 More people should be tested for HIV to reduce late diagnosis**
- 826 Cochrane says antiviral drugs are not effective in Bell's palsy**  
Charity calls for pooling of patents for newer HIV drugs  
Drug company and charity agree to collaborate to develop a new treatment for Chagas' disease
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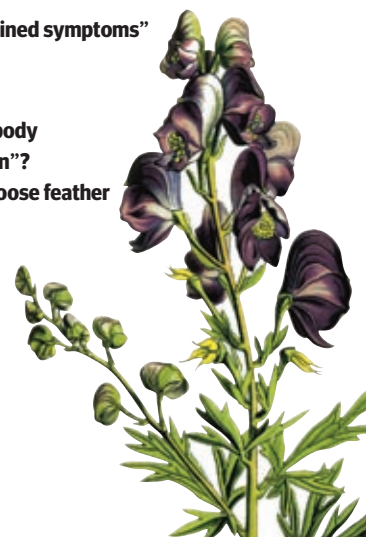
## MINERVA

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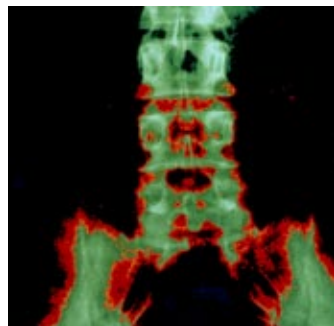
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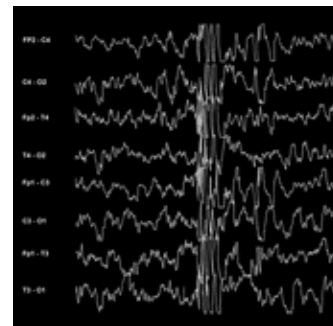
Preventing falls with vitamin D, p 843



Low back pain, p 850



Serum tumour markers, p 852



Tonic clonic seizure, p 862

## RESEARCH

### 843 **Fall prevention with supplemental and active forms of vitamin D: a meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials**

Supplemental vitamin D<sub>2</sub> or D<sub>3</sub> at 700-1000 IU a day was associated with a significant 19% reduction in falls relative to no supplementation

H A Bischoff-Ferrari, B Dawson-Hughes, H B Staehelin, J E Orav, A E Stuck, R Theiler, J B Wong, A Egli, D P Kiel, J Henschkowski

### 847 **Partial protection of seasonal trivalent inactivated vaccine against novel pandemic influenza A/H1N1 2009: case-control study in Mexico City**

The 2008-2009 seasonal flu vaccine may provide some protection against swine flu, particularly the most severe forms of the disease

Lourdes Garcia-Garcia, Jose Luis Valdespino-Gómez, Eduardo Lazcano-Ponce, Aida Jimenez-Corona, Anjarath Higuera-Iglesias, Pablo Cruz-Hervert, Bulmaro Cano-Arellano, Antonio Garcia-Anaya, Elizabeth Ferreira-Guerrero, Renata Baez-Saldaña, Leticia Ferreyra-Reyes, Samuel Ponce-de-León-Rosales, Celia Alpuche-Aranda, Mario Henry Rodriguez-López, Rogelio Perez-Padilla, Mauricio Hernandez-Avila

» Editorial, p 815

### 848 **Life expectancy in relation to cardiovascular risk factors: 38 year follow-up of 19 000 men in the Whitehall study**

Life expectancy was 10 years shorter for men who smoked, had hypertension, and had high serum cholesterol at entry than for men with no cardiovascular risk factors at baseline

Robert Clarke, Jonathan Emberson, Astrid Fletcher, Elizabeth Breeze, Michael Marmot, Martin J Shipley

### 849 **Longitudinal histories as predictors of future diagnoses of domestic abuse: modelling study**

Bayesian prediction models using data from routine electronic medical records could give early warning of receiving a diagnosis of abuse in the next few years, for both women and men

Ben Y Reis, Isaac S Kohane, Kenneth D Mandl

### 850 **Prognosis for patients with chronic low back pain: inception cohort study**

Among Australian adults with low back pain for more than 90 days, over a third recovered within 9 months and four out of 10 recovered within a year

» Editorial, p 816

### 851 **Adiposity and weight change in mid-life in relation to healthy survival after age 70 in women: prospective cohort study**

For every one unit increase of adult women's body mass index, the odds of healthy survival beyond 70 years of age were reduced by 12%

Qi Sun, Mary K Townsend, Olivia I Okereke, Oscar H Franco, Frank B Hu, Francine Grodstein

## CLINICAL REVIEW

### 852 **Serum tumour markers: how to order and interpret them**

C M Sturgeon, L C Lai, M J Duffy

» Practice, p 859

## PRACTICE

### 859 **RATIONAL TESTING**

#### Appropriate requesting of serum tumour markers

Tumour markers have a limited role, if any, in initial investigations, but they can be important in following up patients with known malignancy

Eric S Kilpatrick, Michael J Lind

» Clinical Review, p 852

### 860 **10-MINUTE CONSULTATION**

#### Exacerbation of atopic eczema in children

Matthew Ridd, Sarah Purdy

### 862 **DRUG POINT**

#### Chitosan may decrease serum valproate and increase the risk of seizure reappearance

Pasquale Striano, Federico Zara, Carlo Minetti, Salvatore Striano

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PETER BYRNE/PA WIRE/PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES

## PICTURE OF THE WEEK

Ken Dodd and children from Mount Primary School plant tree number 1 of the NHS forest at Alder Hey Children's Hospital, Liverpool. The NHS Forest scheme will oversee the planting of 1.3 million trees in or around hospitals and health facilities across the UK, one for each employee of the NHS.

## THE WEEK IN NUMBERS

**25%** Proportion of Europeans aged 85+ affected by dementia (Editorial, p 818)

**77 000** Number of people in the UK infected with HIV (News, p 825)

**56%** Proportion of drug donations between 1998 and 2008 that were appropriate given the characteristics of the event and what the recipient needed (Research, p 832)

**700 IU** Dose above which vitamin D may reduce falls in older persons (Research, p 843)

**15 million** Estimated number of serum tumour marker measurements made each year in the UK (Clinical review, p 852)

## THE WEEK IN QUOTES

**"A deliberate decision to die may appear repugnant, but any treatment in the absence of her consent would have been unlawful"** (News, p 824)

**"Child psychiatry's attempts to give better services to adolescents have been unsuccessful"** (Head to head, p 834)

**"Mid-life adiposity decreases the probability of maintaining an optimal overall health status in women"** (Research, p 851)

**"Continuity [of care] is complex, difficult to define, and even more difficult to quantify"** (Personal view, p 865)

**"Commonly requested gastrointestinal and gynaecological tumour markers may remain normal when cancer is present"** (Practice, p 859)

## EDITOR'S CHOICE

## The science and art of medicine



RANDY TORY-CREAKE

**Clinical review, p 852**  
**Practice, p 859**

Last week's *BMJ* cast yet further doubt on prostate specific antigen as a screening tool for prostate cancer (2009;339:b3572, b3537, b3601), and this week we warm to the theme of tumour markers and their limitations. The Clinical Review (p 852) and the Practice article on rational testing (p 859) make clear that tumour markers are a mixed bag, not to be used in screening, unhelpful for diagnosis in patients with non-specific symptoms, and best reserved for monitoring once a diagnosis has been made. Unfocused requests and inappropriate use of tumour markers cost health services around the world large sums of money. They provide false reassurance in some cases and cause unnecessary anxiety, investigations, and treatment in others.

The authors stress that in the right hands and in some conditions—notably germ cell tumours—tumour markers have an important role. And as options for cancer treatment improve, the next generation of predictive serum tests may identify patients most likely to benefit—the holy grail of personalised treatment already available to some extent in breast cancer care.

Also looking to the future, Menno de Jong and Rogier Sanders describe how recombinant technology may transform the way we produce flu vaccines (p 815). Using cell based platforms to produce subunits of the HA antigen would remove the need to grow vaccines in eggs, which is slow, unpredictable, difficult with some strains of virus, and (prosaically but obviously) limited by the supply of eggs. The ingenious flu virus can undergo both antigenic drift (through evolution of the HA protein) and antigenic shift (the development of pandemic

strains). So it's reassuring to hear from researchers in Mexico that last year's seasonal flu vaccine seems to have provided some level of cross protection against H1N1, especially severe forms of the disease, during their recent epidemic (p 847).

Reassuring too that something as simple as vitamin D supplementation reduces falls in older people. Vitamin D improves muscle strength as well as bones, through a direct effect on vitamin D receptors in muscle. Trials have shown that in people at risk of vitamin D deficiency, supplementation improves strength, function, and balance in a dose related way. In their systematic review, H A Bischoff-Ferrari and colleagues identified eight randomised controlled trials of supplementation in people older than 65, and conclude that a dose of between 700 and 1000 IU per day reduces falls by about a fifth within two to five months of starting treatment (p 843). Lower doses don't seem to be effective.

Elsewhere in this week's journal we have a hymn to personal continuity in primary care (p 865). What Helen Richards means by this is being responsible for patients over an extended period of time, being the first point of contact in most episodes of illness, understanding the patient's health in the context of their community, and coordinating care within a complex health system. By contrast with access to care, which is easy to measure and a vote winner, continuity is complex, hard to define, and even harder to quantify. In the current climate, this may mean it's doomed.

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

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## PLUS

Career Focus, jobs, and courses appear after p 868

**Last week's poll asked:**

**Should doctors treating patients with genetic diseases be allowed to inform relatives about the risks they may face?**

**You voted:**

**Yes: 308 (69%) No: 137 (31%)**

**This week's poll asks:**

**Do gyms have responsibilities for people with eating disorders?**

**Go to [bmj.com](http://bmj.com) to vote**

**WHAT'S NEW ON BMJ.COM****LATEST RESEARCH**

**Varenicline and suicidal behaviour:** Although a doubling of the risk of self harm with the smoking cessation product varenicline cannot be ruled out, the findings of this study based on data from the UK General Practice Research Database provide some reassurance concerning its association with suicidal behaviour.

**Contribution of smoking during pregnancy to inequalities in stillbirth and infant death in Scotland, 1994-2003:** Tackling smoking during pregnancy may help to reduce the socioeconomic inequalities in stillbirths and infant deaths by as much as 30-40%. However, action on smoking on its own is unlikely to be sufficient, and other measures to improve the social circumstances, social support, and health of mothers and infants are needed, according to this population based retrospective cohort study.

**Reliability of patient responses in pay for performance schemes:** There is little evidence to support the concern of some general practitioners that low response rates and selective non-response bias have led to systematic unfairness in payments attached to questionnaire scores, according to this analysis of data from the national GP Patient Survey in England.

See these and other research papers at [bmj.com/research.dtl](http://bmj.com/research.dtl)

**LATEST BLOGS**

Tessa Richards and Georg Röggl, *BMJ* editors at large, were both in Austria last week. Tessa attended the annual European Health Forum in Bad Gastein, where "debate focused on the impact of the financial crisis on health and what governments should do about it." Meanwhile, at the 45th annual meeting of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes, Georg identified the main areas of interest to be a possible association between cancer and insulin therapy, the struggle for clearly defined therapy targets in type 2 diabetes, and a call for attention to the excess cardiovascular mortality associated with severe mental illness.

Read more about these and other debates at [blogs.bmj.com/bmj/](http://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/)

**LATEST PODCAST**

Last week Duncan Jarvies talked to Ben Reis, from Harvard Medical School, about using longitudinal histories to predict domestic abuse. Mabel Chew found out from Charlie Tomson about the evidence behind using statins in patients with kidney disease. This week, Duncan Jarvies will be talking to Professor Peter Fleming about sudden infant death syndrome and the latest research into factors influencing it. Kirsten Patrick will be finding out from Cathie Sturgeon about the use of genetic markers in the diagnosis of cancer.

<http://podcasts.bmj.com/bmj/>

**LATEST VIDEO**

The coming of  $\beta$  blockers: Brian Prichard's seminal paper on treatment of hypertension with propranolol was published in the *BMJ* in 1964. In this video extra to mark the *BMJ* archive now being fully searchable online to 1840, he discusses the impact his paper had, which led to propranolol becoming the first-line treatment for hypertension, saving thousands of lives before it was replaced by more modern drugs.

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