



A 61 year old woman admitted after falling down stairs at home
Try the picture quiz in **ENDGAMES**, p 881

A German radio station recently ran a rather morbid competition: the winner was offered a cheque to cover their funeral costs (not to pay for the funeral itself, but for funeral insurance). In the UK, funeral costs have risen by 50% over the past six years and a funeral costs on average around £5000 (€5700; \$8100). But the sky's the limit, depending on the choice of coffin and hidden costs that get bundled in—refrigeration, embalming, body preparation, and flowers (www.guardian.co.uk, 28 March 2011).

Extreme social rejection and physical pain share similar areas of the brain (www.pnas.org, doi:10.1073/pnas.1102693108). A US team showed people who had recently experienced an unwanted relationship break-up a picture of their ex-partner, and asked them to think about the rejection. Functional magnetic resonance showed that the areas of the brain that support the sensory components of physical pain became active. The results, say the researchers, give new meaning to the idea that “rejection hurts.”

Norwegian doctors appear to be a healthy lot. In a 40 year review of national records, the doctors had lower mortality rates for all causes of death apart from suicide than the general population, although they had a higher mortality than other graduates. Over the 40 year span, mortality for doctors converged towards the rates for other university graduates and for people in human service occupations. Doctors' higher rate of suicide was thought to account for the mortality gap between doctors and other university graduates (*BMC Public Health* 2011;11:173, doi:10.1186/1471-2458-11-173).

The hormone dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) is the most abundantly produced steroid in humans. A study of DHEA's effect on longitudinal bone growth and skeletal maturation found that the hormone suppressed metatarsal growth, growth plate chondrocyte proliferation, and hypertrophy and differentiation. DHEA-induced inhibition was cancelled out by culturing metatarsals with DHEA in the presence of an inhibitor of the oestrogen receptor, but not when in the presence of an androgen receptor inhibitor. The researchers say their findings indicate that DHEA suppresses bone growth by acting directly at the growth plate through oestrogen receptors (*Endocrinology* 2011;152:1423-33, doi:10.1210/en.2010-0920).



A 91 year old woman with a family history of breast cancer presented with a one year history of erythema of her left breast and nipple. Differential diagnoses included Paget's disease of the nipple and nipple eczema. A trial of steroid cream was unsuccessful. Examination showed an erythematous, crusty nipple-areolar complex with nipple destruction. Left breast core biopsy and nipple skin biopsy confirmed ductal carcinoma in situ with Paget's disease of the nipple. The patient had a left mastectomy. This condition presents rarely. Suspicious features of Paget's—including presentation above the age of 50, nipple-areolar complex involvement, nipple destruction, and no improvement with a four week trial of steroid cream—warrant referral to a breast unit.

Aaron T W Ng (aaron.ng@doctors.org.uk), foundation year 1, Tracey Irvine, consultant, Department of Breast Surgery, Royal Surrey County Hospital, Guildford GU2 7XX, UK

Patient consent obtained.

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2011;341:d2255

Do steroids confer any benefit to patients with severe community acquired pneumonia who require hospital admission? A prospective, double blind, randomised trial conducted in Spain and involving 56 patients reports that methylprednisolone treatment in combination with antibiotics significantly improves respiratory failure and accelerates clinical and radiological recovery. But no differences in mortality rates were identified between the methylprednisolone and placebo groups (*Critical Care* 2011;15:R96, doi:10.1186/cc10103).

Teenage fatherhood has educational and economic consequences, according to *Economic Inquiry* (2011, doi:10.1111/j.1465-7295.2011.00372.x). Less researched than

teenage motherhood, this study found that teenage fatherhood significantly reduces the chances of graduating from high school, but increases the chance of full time employment by six percentage points and military employment by two percentage points after a birth. Teenage fatherhood also leads to an increased likelihood of early marriage and co-habitation.

Eating disorders are also prevalent in younger age groups. Surveillance over 14 months using the British Paediatric Surveillance System and a new child and adolescent psychiatry surveillance system designed for the purpose found an incidence of 3.01 per 100 000 children under 13 years, with 37% meeting the criteria for anorexia nervosa, 1.4% for bulimia, and 43% for eating disorders not otherwise specified. Half were admitted to hospital, and at one year, of those known to follow-up, 73% were reported improved, 6% worse, and 10% unchanged (*British Journal of Psychiatry* 2011;198:295-301, doi:10.1192/bjp.bp.110.081356).

Despite Canada's universal healthcare system, the patterns of care and clinical outcomes differ for urban dwelling and rural dwelling patients with newly diagnosed heart failure. Results of a cohort study showed that patients living in urban settings were more likely to receive outpatient care, be admitted to hospital, and to present to emergency rooms in the first 12 months after diagnosis than their rural counterparts. Urban residential location was related to a lower one year risk of mortality in men with a new diagnosis of heart failure, but not in women (*Circulation Heart Failure* 2011, doi:10.1161/circheartfailure.110.959262).

A senior doctor writing in *QJM* wonders if the tendency of junior doctors to rely on electronic systems is a help or a hindrance (2011;104:373-7, doi:10.1093/qjmed/hcr004). Is it a case of “phew—technology saved us” or “IT makes us lazy”? Should we, he asks, be using IT to cover the backs of the lowest common denominator doctor (who in turn reflects the quality of training by seniors) making sure that reviews are triggered, or should IT be used to supplement clinical care? Bedside teaching should not, he says, be forsaken in favour of preparing a mini-presentation.

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2011;342:d2251