

EDITORIALS

- 1217 Is prolonged lack of sleep associated with obesity?**
Possibly, and it could have other effects on long term ill health, say Francesco P Cappuccino and Michelle A Miller » *Research, p 1247*
- 1218 Total disc replacement for chronic low back pain**
Current evidence suggests this may be the best surgical solution, says Jeremy Fairbank » *Research, p 1249*
- 1220 Overcrowding in emergency departments and adverse outcomes**
Death and admission rates are higher when length of stay is longer, says Melissa L McCarthy » *Research, p 1250*
- 1221 Medical treatment, PCI, or CABG for coronary artery disease?**
The three approaches should complement one another, not compete, say Andre Lamy and colleagues

LETTERS

- 1223 Laser refractive eye surgery; The pill and thrombosis**
- 1224 Acute bronchiolitis**
- 1225 Funding CME**
- 1226 New deal on disease definition; Response: Jack Winkler replies to Joachim von Braun**

NEWS

- 1227 Changes required to health bill will lead to delays, says Clegg**
Government U-turn decision on public health
- 1228 Poor accountability could damage NHS**
Rise in abortions reflects poor links between contraception and abortion services
- 1229 Four in one polypill halves predicted cardiovascular risk**
Three out of 12 hospitals fail to meet standards of care of older people
- 1230 E coli outbreak linked to cucumbers from Spain**
Trial of niacin alongside statin is stopped early
Fewer tests for cancer can help reduce costs, say US doctors
Funders agree to increase access to research
- 1231 US doctors identify best ways to cut costs without harm**
- 1232 African clinical trial ends early due to high mortality in children**
WHO processes on dealing with a pandemic need to be overhauled
Women Peace Laureates say rape is being used as a weapon of war on a massive scale
- 1233 African governments fail to fulfil promises on child health**

SHORT CUTS

- 1234 What's new in the other general journals**

OBSERVATIONS

BODY POLITIC

- 1235 Keep GPs in the driving seat**
Nigel Hawkes

NHS REFORMS

- 1236 A chance to optimise "value" in the NHS**
Jonathan Fielden, James Mountford

LIFE AND DEATH

- 1237 Are policy makers really listening?**
Iona Heath

FEATURES

- 1238 Why sorry doesn't need to be the hardest word**
The question of open disclosure in medical errors has crept up the political agenda in the UK and doctors should brace themselves for a culture change in this area, reports Jane Feinmann

HEAD TO HEAD

- 1240 Has child protection become a form of madness?**
Alain Gregoire and Simonetta Agnello Hornby argue that child protection fails to detect many children in need of help while becoming ever more bureaucratic and unhelpful, while Margaret Spinelli and Louise Howard believe that child protection interventions are essential for preventing child abuse

ANALYSIS

- 1242 Is there a risk in avoiding risk for younger patients with aortic valve disease?**
Tom Treasure, Asif Hasan, and Magdi Yacoub argue that a culture of risk avoidance in cardiac surgery may mean patients are not getting the most appropriate treatment
- 1244 Commentary: Unintended consequences of governance**
Ben Bridgewater
Commentary: Talking to patients about surgical innovations
Jane M Blazeby, Angus G K McNair

RESEARCH

- 1246 Research highlights: the pick of BMJ research papers this week**
- 1247 Longitudinal analysis of sleep in relation to BMI and body fat in children: the FLAME study**
Philippa J Carter, Barry J Taylor, Sheila M Williams, Rachael W Taylor
» *Editorial, p 1217*
- 1248 Longer term effects of very low energy diet on obstructive sleep apnoea in a cohort derived from a randomised controlled trial: prospective observational follow-up study**
Kari Johansson, Erik Hemmingsson, Richard Harlid, Ylva Trolle Lagerros, Fredrik Granath, Stephan Rössner, Martin Neovius

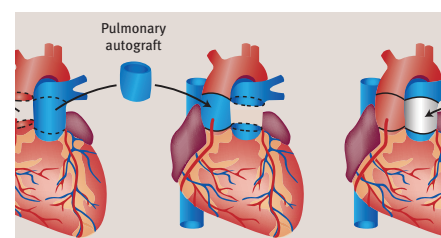


PATTI MCCONVILLE/THE IMAGE BANK/GETTY IMAGES

Clinical Review, p 1251



Disc prostheses in back pain, pp 1218, 1249



Aortic valve disease, p 1242



Sleep and obesity, pp 1217, 1247



Abortion and contraceptive services, p 1228

1249 Surgery with disc prosthesis versus rehabilitation in patients with low back pain and degenerative disc: two year follow-up of randomised study
Christian Høllum, Lars Gunnar Johnsen, Kjersti Storheim, Øystein P Nygaard, Jens Ivar Brox, Ivar Rossvoll, Magne Rø, Leiv Sandvik, Oliver Grundnes, and the Norwegian Spine Study Group » *Editorial, p 1218*

1250 Association between waiting times and short term mortality and hospital admission after departure from emergency department: population based cohort study from Ontario, Canada
Astrid Guttman, Michael J Schull, Marian J Vermeulen, Therese A Stukel
» *Editorial, p 1220*

CLINICAL REVIEW

1251 The assessment and management of insomnia in primary care
Karen Falloon, Bruce Arroll, C Raina Elley, Antonio Fernando

PRACTICE

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT

1256 Intraoperative fluid management guided by oesophageal Doppler monitoring
Martin Kuper, Stuart J Gold, Colin Callow, Tanviha Quraishi, Sarah King, Aundrea Mulreany, Michele Bianchi, Daniel H Conway

10-MINUTE CONSULTATION

1261 Otorrhoea
Miran Pankhania, Owen Judd, Andy Ward

OBITUARIES

1263 Ann McPherson
General practitioner, communicator, and campaigner for assisted dying

VIEWS AND REVIEWS

REVIEW OF THE WEEK

1264 How We Age: A Doctor's Journey into the Heart of Growing Old by Marc Agronin
Desmond O'Neill

BETWEEN THE LINES

1265 A healthy island
Theodore Dalrymple

MEDICAL CLASSICS

1265 The Drugs Don't Work
by The Verve
Laura Gleeson

COLUMNISTS

1266 Bad medicine: digital rectal examination
Des Spence
No news is good news
James Owen Drife

ENDGAMES

1267 Quiz page for doctors in training

MINERVA

1268 The effect of drinking cranberry juice, and other stories



Ann McPherson has died, p 1263



Is Sark the healthiest island? p 1265

Join your
colleagues.

BMJ Masterclasses

masterclasses.bmj.com



The Editor, BMJ

BMA House, Tavistock Square,
London WC1H 9JR

Email: editor@bmj.com

Tel: +44 (0)20 7387 4410

Fax: +44 (0)20 7383 6418

BMA MEMBERS' INQUIRIES

Email: membership@bma.org.uk

Tel: +44 (0)20 7383 6642

BMJ CAREERS ADVERTISING

Email: sales@bmjcareers.com

Tel: +44 (0)20 7383 6531

DISPLAY ADVERTISING

Email: sales@bmjgroup.com

Tel: +44 (0)20 7383 6386

REPRINTS

UK/Rest of world

Email: ngurneyrandall@bmjgroup.com

Tel: +44 (0)20 8445 5825

USA

Email: mfogler@medicalreprints.com

Tel: +1 (856) 489 4446

SUBSCRIPTIONS

BMA Members

Email: membership@bma.org.uk

Tel: +44 (0)20 7383 6642

Non-BMA Members

Email: support@bmjgroup.com

Tel: +44 (0)20 7383 6270

OTHER RESOURCES

For all other contacts:

resources.bmj.com/bmj/contact-us

For advice to authors:

resources.bmj.com/bmj/authors

To submit an article:

submit.bmj.com

The BMJ is published by BMJ Publishing Group Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of the British Medical Association.

The BMA grants editorial freedom to the Editor of the BMJ. The views expressed in the journal are those of the authors and may not necessarily comply with BMA policy. The BMJ follows guidelines on editorial independence produced by the World Association of Medical Editors (www.wame.org/wamestmt.htm#independence) and the code on good publication practice produced by the Committee on Publication Ethics (www.publicationethics.org.uk/guidelines/).

The BMJ is intended for medical professionals and is provided without warranty, express or implied. Statements in the journal are the responsibility of their authors and advertisers and not authors' institutions, the BMJ Publishing Group, or the BMA unless otherwise specified or determined by law. Acceptance of advertising does not imply endorsement.

To the fullest extent permitted by law, the BMJ Publishing Group shall not be liable for any loss, injury, or damage resulting from the use of the BMJ or any information in it whether based on contract, tort, or otherwise. Readers are advised to verify any information they choose to rely on.

©BMJ Publishing Group Ltd 2011

All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any other means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior permission, in writing, of the BMJ

Published weekly. US periodicals class postage paid at Rahway, NJ. Postmaster: send address changes to BMJ, c/o Mercury Airfreight International Ltd Inc, 365 Blair Road, Avenel, NJ 07001, USA. \$796. Weekly Printed by Polestar Limited



MARK SCHIEFELBEIN/AP/PA

PICTURE OF THE WEEK

Workers look out from shattered upper windows of the St John's Regional Medical Center in Joplin, Missouri. The hospital was severely damaged, and at least 142 people were killed with many more left injured or missing when a tornado devastated the area on 22 May. A power generator was destroyed, causing the death of five patients on ventilators.

THE WEEK IN NUMBERS

0.56 Reduction in body mass index at the age of 7 associated with a difference of sleep duration of one hour between the ages of 3 and 5 (Research, p 1247)

3.7 days Reduction in the total length of hospital stay after operation with the introduction of oesophageal Doppler cardiac output monitoring (Practice, p 1256)

1 in 3 Approximate proportion of the UK population affected by insomnia (Clinical Review, p 1251)

10 in 100 000 New patients presenting with cholesteatoma each year (Practice, p 1261)

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"GPs are learning the hard lesson taught to generations of would-be reformers in the NHS: ministers propose, but do not dispose. Take the lead if you must, but watch your back"

Journalist Nigel Hawkes on commissioning by general practitioners (Observations, p 1235)

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Last week we asked, "Has child protection become a form of madness?"

66% voted yes (total 274 votes cast)

This week's poll asks, "Should non-medical health professionals be the first port of call for patients with back pain?"

► **bmj.com** Cast your vote

EDITOR'S CHOICE

We need to talk about nursing

The accounts of substandard patient care beg searching questions about the sort of NHS that's worth saving. We can all agree it's not the bad sort, but what are the levers that could guarantee the good sort

Bad nursing stories have been outnumbering good nursing stories of late, and thanks to the BBC they've been given wide exposure. The current run began in April on BBC's *Question Time* (<http://bbc.in/iWGf3B>). In an emotional contribution, Telegraph journalist Cristina Odone reflected angrily on the insensitive nursing care received by her elderly mother during her three emergency admissions.

A few weeks later in a BBC radio programme, *Independent* journalist Christina Patterson discussed the lessons she'd learnt from her six operations in three hospitals over the past eight years (<http://bbc.in/kUaarj>). She'd learnt that "the nurses who seemed to have time to stand around talking to each other, and didn't seem to like their jobs very much, didn't like to be disturbed and if you wanted to keep them happy the best thing to do was not to ask them for anything and never, ever to press your buzzer." She couldn't understand how nurses "could see people who were suffering and frightened and maybe even dying and seem to think they were a nuisance."

Last week, the BBC dropped an even bigger bombshell on the *Today* radio programme (<http://bbc.in/mgJ9D8>). A woman was describing what had contributed to her mother's death in hospital. "This rash had been caused by the way Ipswich Hospital dealt with toileting for the elderly. It wasn't just my mother that was swathed in nappies to make life easier for the nurses—they said they didn't have time to put elderly people on commodes—it was the general rule."

The plural of anecdote is not data, but data of sorts are now accumulating on the sorry state of nursing in some hospitals. The *Today* programme coincided with the first 12 reports into care of older people by the Care Quality Commission. It makes chilling reading (p 1229) and suggests that

something of a pattern is emerging. The CQC's messages are broadly in line with February's report from the Health Service Ombudsman (*BMJ* 2011;342:d1064) and last year's report into Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust (*BMJ* 2010;340:c1137). Richmond House, or whoever's in charge these days, we have a problem.

The problem is not just heartless nurses or "resources," although they're a part of it. As Desmond O'Neill says in his book review, it is clear "that many healthcare workers have a troubling moral and professional blindness to the humanity and complex needs of older people." The unanswered question remains "how the education, altruism, and professionalism of large groups of healthcare workers have been subverted to such a dismissive attitude to those in greatest need" (p 1264).

Together, all the accounts of substandard patient care beg searching questions about the sort of NHS that's worth saving. We can all agree it's not the bad sort, but what are the levers that could guarantee the good sort, given that basic humanity seems to be failing?

Nigel Hawkes reports on last week's attempt by deputy prime minister Nick Clegg to assume the mantle of saviour of the NHS, the latest in a long line (p 1235). If he gets his way, the changes to the NHS and Social Care Bill will be so substantial that it will have to be sent back to MPs to be considered again. By the time that's done, we may have lost a health secretary, and, who knows, the coalition government.

Tony Delamothe deputy editor, *BMJ*
tdelamothe@bmj.com

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2011;342:d3416

To receive Editor's Choice by email each week, visit bmj.com/cgi/customalert

◉ **Twitter** Follow the editor, Fiona Godlee, at twitter.com/fgodlee and the *BMJ*'s latest at twitter.com/bmj_latest



Career Focus, jobs, and courses appear after p 1266

Articles appearing in this print journal have already been published on bmj.com, and the version in print may have been shortened. bmj.com also contains material that is supplementary to articles: this will be indicated in the text (references are given as w1, w2, etc) and be labelled as extra on bmj.com.

Please cite all articles by year, volume, and elocator (rather than page number), eg *BMJ* 2011; 342:d286.

A note on how to cite each article appears at the end of each article, and this is the form the reference will take in PubMed and other indexes.

BMJ.COM: MOST READ

Effect of supplementation during pregnancy with L-arginine and antioxidant vitamins in medical food on pre-eclampsia in high risk population



Dietary calcium intake and risk of fracture and osteoporosis
 Has child protection become a form of madness?
 Outbreak of measles in France shows no signs of abating
 Opening up data at the European Medicines Agency

100% recycled The *BMJ* is printed on 100% recycled paper (except the cover)