

# IN THIS ISSUE

## The "O"-word

The global epidemic of obesity hasn't left Australia unscathed. The 1999–2000 Australian Diabetes, Obesity and Lifestyle Study (AusDiab) (page 427) confirms the alarming rise in the prevalence of adult obesity and its association with certain lifestyle choices.

And things don't look much better in the near future. Nearly a quarter of our children and adolescents are overweight or obese, a fact which may affect their psychological and social wellbeing as well as physical health. Waters and Baur suggest some remedies on page 422.

## You've got mail

In **Letters** (page 467), we present an uncommon cause of seizures in an infant, and a reminder about a potentially common source of cross-infection in hospitals (when did you last clean your stethoscope?). There is also a survey of travellers' uptake of pre-travel health advice and hepatitis vaccinations (could be better) and comments on whether "physician heal thyself" is an appropriate maxim.

## Paging Doctor DNA

As the field of medical genetics expands, it might be worth adding the names of a few clinical geneticists to your little black referral book. What do these specialists do, and what are the applications of clinical genetics on both individual and population levels? Haan discusses this aspect of **The New Genetics**, in our second article of the series, on page 458.

## Living with schizophrenia

Bias against mental illness may be one of the reasons why the treatment of schizophrenia in Australia is still suboptimal, despite recent advances in drug and psychosocial therapies. So says McGorry on (page 425). Our supplement, *Comprehensive care for people with schizophrenia living in the community*, provides an overview of the standard of care required and available for Australians living with this condition.

## Something chronic

Persistent pain is not an easy problem to deal with, by doctor or patient. So what do you do when someone's pain control seems to have hit a brick wall? Even better, how do you avoid the wall entirely? Turn to Goucke's **Clinical Update** (page 444) for the answers.

## Ready, set, go!

The Better Medication Management System is on its way! Are we ready for this system of accessible electronic medication records for all Australians, and will it improve health outcomes, asks Wrobel (page 448).

## Beyond autism

National Autism Awareness Week (11 to 17 May this year) prompted us to publish an editorial on childhood interventions that have been shown to change outcomes in autism. As advocates for doctors and parents of children with autism, Couper and Sampson (page 424) call for more evidence-based programs to be funded in Australia.

## Kava questions

Pacific Islanders have enjoyed a drink made from kava for hundreds of years. More recently they've exported the plant to Western countries, where its extracts are prepared differently and used as anxiolytics. However, a spate of cases of kava-associated hepatotoxicity, including a fatality in Australia (Gow et al, page 442), has led to the recall of all kava products by our Therapeutic Goods Administration, and a safety review which should be complete later this month.

Moulds and Malani (page 451) are on the spot in Fiji, where kava safety will have economic as well as public health implications, and Currie and Clough (page 421) discuss the limited evidence for liver damage with traditional kava use.

## Heavyweight double

Two conditions comprising Australia's National Health Priority Areas — asthma and depression — are found to be closely linked in a large survey of South Australians, say Goldney and colleagues (page 437).

## Another look at autonomy

Some doctors feel uncomfortable with the concept of rationing in medicine while acting as advocates for their patients. According to Tauber (page 454), these roles can be reconciled.

## How would you like your vaccine?

Warmed, rubbed between the palms, or straight from the fridge, asked Maiden et al (page 433). Their randomised controlled trial determines whether the first two methods of preparing adult diphtheria–tetanus vaccine actually make the injection less painful.

## Another time ... another place ...

*Persons who are naturally very fat are apt to die earlier than those who are slender.*

*Hippocrates [460-375BC]*