

SMOKE GETS IN YOUR EYES

But does passive smoking cause breast cancer? A recent draft review of the evidence from the California Environmental Protection Agency now proposes that it does. However, experts from Australia's National Cancer Control Initiative (page 236) urge caution in interpreting the evidence.

On firmer ground, we do know about the cardiovascular effects of smoking. Hurley and colleagues (page 252) calculate that we could save billions in the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme over the next 40 years if smoking rates could be reduced by as little as 5%.

And remember there's a group in society that's usually highly motivated to quit, say Ford and Dobson (Letters, page 285) — pregnant women. They analysed the risks that smoking poses to mother and infant, and the possible savings (in more than monetary terms) with strategic smoking interventions in pregnancy.

Also, in this issue's Letters (pages 283–285) follow the dust-up from a recent controversial MJA editorial proposing that smokers be given lower priority on surgical waiting lists.

SAFE AS SALINE

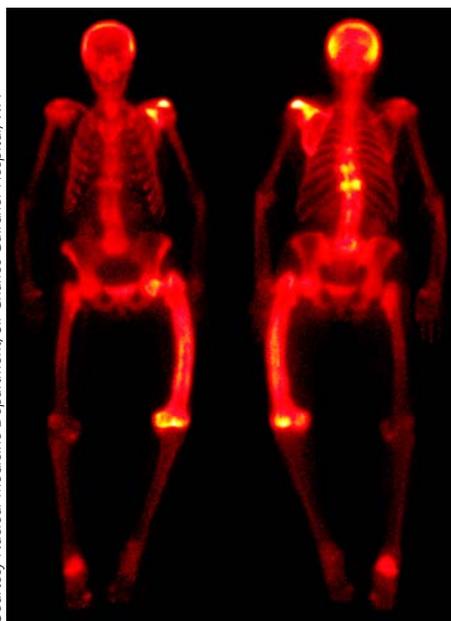
A 1998 Cochrane meta-analysis cast grave doubt over intensive care practice worldwide by suggesting that albumin use in fluid resuscitation was dangerous. However, a recent landmark study conducted in Australian and New Zealand ICUs has shown that this is not so. According to key players Finfer et al (page 237), this randomised controlled trial, entitled SAFE (Saline versus Albumin Fluid Evaluation), was a milestone that did more than definitively answer an important clinical question.

DOCTORS GOING PUBLIC

Public reporting of surgical performance has been available in the US for years and is being introduced in the UK. Neil et al (page 266) ask if we should do so too, as a former President of the UK General Medical Council (page 271) weighs into the debate on accountability.

PAGET'S OUT OF THE CLOSET

Recent advances in understanding and treating Paget's disease of bone are the subject of Walsh's *Clinical Update* (page 262). We may not know why newly diagnosed Paget's disease now seems less common and less severe, but we can map its genetic mutations and treat it safely.



Courtesy Nuclear Medicine Department, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, WA

CAM AND THE NEXT GENERATION

As we approach the end of our series on *Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, it's become clear that doctors ignore the subject at our (and our patients') peril. Owen and Lewith (page 276) describe how overseas medical schools familiarise students with CAM, and how the ideal medical curriculum might do so. Brooks (page 275) outlines the Australian Medical Council's stance on this, which may explain why our medical schools are in a state of flux.

George et al (page 248) show how conventional healthcare providers' attitudes to CAM can influence those with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

STROKE RISK

What puts someone at risk of having another stroke after a first one? By identifying risk factors in over 7000 patients, Lee and colleagues (page 244) shed more light on secondary stroke prevention.

EPIDEMIOLOGISTS TREAT CHILD ABUSE

The recent overturning of one mother's conviction for child abuse in the UK and its repercussions for over 200 other cases have prompted timely considerations for *National Child Protection Week* (5–11 September): Hilton's letter (page 288) cites cases where those convicted (and innocent) were less fortunate, while expats Heller et al (page 240) apply some very lateral thinking to legal decision-making when child abuse is suspected.

TURNING JAPANESE ENCEPHALITIS

The disturbing consequences in two cases of Japanese encephalitis reported by Geraghty and McCarthy (page 269) and Hanson et al (Letters, page 282) illustrate the desirability of vaccinating travellers to endemic areas. In fact, evidence from the latter case has prompted the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation, responsible for the NHMRC's *Australian immunisation handbook*, to consider changing recommendations for travellers to Papua New Guinea.

FTA + PBS = ?

The debate that has raged over how the Free Trade Agreement between Australia and the US may affect our prized Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme prompted our rapid online publication of two articles now in print: American Outterson (page 260) gives a provocative and refreshingly unparochial view, while Harvey et al (page 256) spell out exactly what the concerns are.

OUT OF HARM'S WAY

Ritter et al (page 242) report on the *15th International Conference on the Reduction of Drug Related Harm*, where it was clear that harm reduction has achieved mainstream acceptance, with good reason.

ANOTHER TIME ... ANOTHER PLACE

Medical practice requires men and women who are devoted to people as well as to their own egos.

John Langone
Harvard Med 1995