

THE “FOOTBALL” WITHDRAWAL

Remember when temazepam capsules were removed from the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme in 2002? Concern that intravenous drug users (IDUs) were injecting the gel in the popular little capsules led to this change of policy. Knowing that if there’s a way around such restrictions someone will find it, Breen et al (page 300) conceived a cunning three-pronged study to determine whether this was the case.

A GUIDELINE THAT IS FOLLOWED

When the National Health and Medical Research Council released guidelines for the management of early breast cancer in 1995, most surgeons who treat the disease believed they were accurate and useful. To discover whether this confidence has translated into changes in practice, McEvoy et al (page 305) examined management patterns for breast cancer in Western Australia throughout the ’90s.

AN INNOCENT BYSTANDER?

The role of homocysteine in B₁₂ and folate metabolism is well established, but over the past 30 years or so its association with atherothrombosis and (more recently) even osteoporosis has emerged. So, should we be measuring and treating patients’ homocysteine levels? Hankey et al (page 314) reveal the answer.

MORE THAN MET THE EYE

A man was found semiconscious in a park with what looked like nasty orbital cellulitis. Over the next few days, with the help of modern imaging techniques and a history from the patient (when he was able to speak), the cause of his condition emerged (Robaei et al, page 329).

ALL FIRED UP

That’s Chapman and Balmain’s state of mind as they call for all cigarettes sold in Australia to be “fire-safe” — meaning they self-extinguish when they’re not being puffed (page 292). And why not, when many of the house and bush fires in this country are started by the smouldering butts of errant smokers.

WELL PREPARED

Now that we know the importance of good glycaemic control in all people with diabetes, it is not surprising that the first-ever consensus statement on diabetes control in women preparing for pregnancy includes ambitious recommendations for ideal HBA_{1c} levels. See page 326 for the statement, from the National Diabetes in Pregnancy Advisory Committee.

DEADLY “RECREATION”

Also in the news recently was the tragic case of a Newcastle man who died after taking γ -hydroxybutyrate (GHB) while on a night out in Sydney. According to research by Caldicott et al (page 310), this death is not the first among recreational users of the drug, also known aptly as “GBH” (grievous bodily harm). In a related letter, Brown (page 343) explains why GHB is no longer used for its original purpose — anaesthesia.



CAM AND THE NEXT FRONTIER

Our voyage of discovery in the *MJA Complementary and Alternative Medicine* series winds up in the subject’s twilight zone, its evidence base. How do we progress beyond saying, “We need more research”? Series editors Bensoussan and Lewith (page 331) show the way forward. Will it *never ever* happen, we wonder...

The landmark clinical trial of St John’s wort in treating depression was the work of a relative newcomer, the US National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine. Its leaders, Chesney and Straus (page 335), describe what feats can be achieved with government foresight and the appropriate research infrastructure.

STUDENT PROBE

“If you don’t put your finger in it, you’ve put your foot in it.” Failure to remember this little axiom has led to much embarrassment when it is revealed that the diagnosis could have been made by a simple digital rectal examination (DRE). But, according to Lawrentschuk and Bolton’s survey of final-year students at the University of Melbourne, however (page 323), gaining competence in DRE can be difficult.

GIRL INTERRUPTED?

When the Family Court handed down its decision to allow a 13-year-old to take the first steps in preparation for a sex-change process, there was a public outcry. On page 319 Spriggs looks beyond the media hype and knee-jerk outrage that surrounded the case at the facts (and the ethics) of what was actually decided.

FOR THE MAN WHO HAS EVERYTHING...

Consider a whole-body CT scan for Christmas! Start saving now, though, because it will set you back over \$800, plus the cost of further testing for the estimated one-third of recipients who will require it. Will it be money well spent? Anderiesz et al (page 295) are not convinced.

REGISTER OR PERISH

Recently, the body of evidence that has led to widespread confidence in some antidepressants came under fire when it was revealed that a number of studies with negative findings had not been published. Publication bias is not a new phenomenon to editors. After a discussion at their recent meeting, the members of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (page 293) have come up with a strategy for ensuring that future trial results don’t fall through the cracks.

ANOTHER TIME ... ANOTHER PLACE

I was trying to persuade a headmaster to randomize caning and detention for boys who were caught smoking. He answered...that the trial was unnecessary as he always knew which boy should be caned...I checked...and it looked as though his method was simple. He caned them all.

Archibald Leman Cochrane, 1972

