

SKIN SAVVY

A national survey has revealed that overall rates of non-melanoma skin cancer in Australia have risen since 1985. There's hope though, say Staples et al (*page 6*): these rates have stabilised for people under 60 years of age, who have been exposed to skin cancer prevention programs.

Speaking of prevention, did you know that shade structures often don't offer much sun protection? Let's opt for function over form, argue Turnbull and Parisi (*page 13*), concerned that guidelines for shade design and creation pay more attention to aesthetics and cost than to effectiveness.

On the topic of treatment, many "skin cancer clinics" have sprung up in Australia, staffed by non-specialist doctors from various backgrounds. Wilkinson et al (*page 11*) point out that little is known about many such clinics, while training opportunities and quality assurance mechanisms for their medical staff are limited or completely absent. They discuss moves to train and advocate for doctors interested in this field, as well as the need for government, businesses and researchers to work together.

I'M A BELIEVER

Just over half the South Australian population used complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) in 2004. MacLennan et al (*page 27*) quizzed CAM users about therapies they sought, their reasons for doing so, and their sometimes mistaken beliefs on the testing of CAMs.

RISING STAR

Announcing the dawning of a new era: a health services evidence collection to guide Australian health policy! On *page 4*, Gruen et al explain how a satellite of the Cochrane Collaboration's Effective Practice and Organisation of Care (EPOC) Group has joined forces with the National Institute of Clinical Studies to develop this important resource.

GENERICALLY SPEAKING

In the event of a pandemic of avian influenza, our limited antiviral stockpile will be allocated according to a priority list. This Who's Who of antiviral recipients isn't publicly available — will it include the Health Minister, for instance? (It's even been put to him that his rations could be decided daily based on his performance during a pandemic...) Antiviral supplies are limited as the patent owners currently hold an exclusive licence for manufacture. Lokuge et al (*page 16*) argue that our government should issue compulsory licences so that Australian generic manufacturers can produce antivirals locally or import them from generic producers.

OUR INVENTORS

What makes an invention a commercial success? Mattes and colleagues asked Australian inventors listed on medical patents about the final commercial outcomes of their inventions in the US, and the process of commercialisation. On *page 33*, they report predictors linked to new or improved products and production processes.

IT'S SHOWTIME

As usual, we showcase the wit and insight of our readers in *Matters Arising* (*page 41*) and *Letters to the Editor* (*page 44*), as they respond to previous articles on automatic reporting of estimated glomerular filtration (eGFR) rate, anorexia nervosa, pethidine in EDs, and treating early breast cancer.

LIFE BEYOND THE WAVE

This time last year the world watched in disbelief as the death toll from the Indian Ocean tsunami climbed steadily to numbers that most of us could barely comprehend. Since then, Australia's involvement with the stricken region has evolved from relief provision to rebuilding and ongoing partnership and support. The involvement of multiple agencies highlights the need for coordination. One Australian coordination body just getting off the ground is the Australian Health Alliance to Assist with Post-tsunami Reconstruction.

On (*page 23*), Komesaroff and Sundram describe how the Health Alliance was formed, its aims, recommendations and actions so far, particularly in Sri Lanka. White also spent time in a region that was indirectly but profoundly affected by the tsunami. His perspective on this (*page 21*) further illustrates the complexity of getting the rebuilding process "right".

ARTESUNATE FOR ALL

A recent international trial showed that artesunate was superior to quinine in treating severe malaria. Great news for South-East and southern Asia, where over 120 million people contract malaria yearly, say Anstey et al (*page 3*). But despite the drug's attractive cost-benefit profile, there's a hitch when it comes to using artesunate in Australia.

ANOTHER TIME ... ANOTHER PLACE

It has been estimated that consumers waste \$500 million a year on medical quackery and another \$500 million dollars annually on some "health foods" which have no beneficial effect ... Unnecessary deaths, injuries, and financial loss ... can be expected to continue until the law requires adequate testing for safety and efficacy of products and devices before they are made available to consumers.

John F Kennedy
Message to Congress on Problems of the Aged
 21 February 1963

