

In brief



Reuters/Oswaldo Rivas

A cameraman films a plastinated human body during a media tour of The human body exhibition at the convention centre in Managua, Nicaragua. The exhibition, open to the public from 18 April to 16 June, aims to raise public awareness on the importance of health care. Plastination is a process used to preserve bodies or body parts, developed by Gunther von Hagens in 1977. The water and fat are replaced by certain plastics, yielding specimens that can be touched and do not smell or decay.

From The Cochrane Library

P is for pregnancy, (anti)psychotics and mounting pressures

The protective effect of folic acid supplementation on neural tube defects is well known. A new review of 31 studies involving nearly 18000 women found that it also leads to a modest increase in birthweight and may reduce the risk of megaloblastic anaemia, but has no impact on a range of other pregnancy outcomes, including the risk of preterm birth, still birth or predelivery anaemia (doi: 10.1002/14651858.CD006896.pub2).

Concerns over the long-term use of antipsychotic drugs in people with dementia include the risk of adverse effects and death. A review of nine studies involving 600 people concluded that planned antipsychotic discontinuation programs should be incorporated into routine clinical care of older people with dementia. However, the authors note that older people with more severe symptoms, or who have responded well to previous

medication, could benefit from continuing antipsychotic treatment (doi: 10.1002/14651858.CD007726.pub2).

The pressures on mental health services are unlikely to abate any time soon, so what role might present or past consumers of mental health services have in providing care when working alongside mental health professionals? A review of 11 studies involving nearly 3000 people looked at the effect consumer–providers might have in peer support, case management, crisis worker and other similar roles. For a range of measures, including client quality of life, general mental health symptoms and use of mental health services, the authors found that outcomes for consumer–providers are no better or worse than those achieved by professionals employed in similar roles (doi: 10.1002/14651858.CD004807.pub2).



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The burden on patients and the health care system from long-term chronic conditions is set to rise inexorably. Self-management is an essential component of ongoing care for which there is a growing evidence base. A new review asks whether computer-based self-management interventions improve outcomes in adults with type 2 diabetes. The results from 16 studies involving over 3500 participants show only a small beneficial effect on blood glucose control, and no evidence of benefit for other biological, cognitive, behavioural or emotional outcomes (doi: 10.1002/14651858.CD008776.pub2).

Peruse these and other reviews this month in *The Cochrane Library* at www.thecochranelibrary.com. Topics include pathogen-reduced platelets for the prevention of bleeding, and parenting interventions for the prevention of unintentional injuries in childhood.

News

Link between infantile colic and migraine

A strong link has been suggested between infantile colic and migraine in children and adolescents aged 6–18 years. The European case-control study involved 208 children presenting with migraines to the emergency departments of three tertiary hospitals between April and June 2012. A control group was composed of 471 children presenting with minor trauma in the same period. A parental questionnaire was administered to both groups to identify a history of infantile colic. A second study of 120 children with tension-type headaches tested the specificity of the association. Children with migraine were significantly more likely than those in the control group to have had infantile colic (72.6% v 26.5%; odds ratio, 6.61). In a migraine with aura subgroup, the prevalence of colic was 69.7% and in the migraine without aura subgroup, the prevalence was 73.9%. A significant association was not found in the tension-type headache group, in which the prevalence of infantile colic was 35.0%. The authors said their results suggested “a common pathophysiology of migraine and infantile colic”.

JAMA 2013; 309: 1607-1612. doi: 10.1001/jama.2013.747

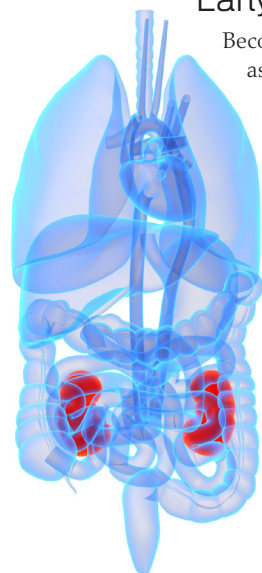


Boot-camp learning benefits trainees

An intensive three-weekend, neurosurgical “boot camp”, comprising both didactic and procedural sessions, for first-year medical postgraduates before the beginning of neurosurgical training has proven effective, according to an American study. Interns who participated in the 2010 Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education-accredited training programs were surveyed 6 months after the boot camp, halfway through their postgraduate year 1 training, and asked about the boot-camp experience, relevance of procedural skills training, and the retention of knowledge. Overall, 99% of respondents had found the course to be helpful and said it would improve their patient care. “Knowledge of items explicitly taught during the didactic portion of the courses was retained or slightly enhanced 6 months later”, the authors reported.

J Neurosurg 2013; 16 April (online). doi: 10.3171/2013.3.JNSI22114

Early overweight doubles kidney risk



Becoming overweight at younger ages has been associated with higher odds of developing chronic kidney disease (CKD) by age 60–64 years. Using a sample of 5362 children born in the United Kingdom in 1 week in March 1946, via the Medical Research Council National Survey of Health and Development, the authors found that “compared with those who first became overweight at age 60–64 years or never became overweight, those first overweight at age 26 or 36 years had approximately double the odds of developing CKD”. They reported that the strength of this association decreased with increasing age when first overweight. “Preventing overweight in early adulthood may have a considerable effect on the prevalence of CKD in the population”, they wrote.

J Am Soc Nephrol 2013; 4 April (online)
doi: 10.1681/ASN.2012070675

From the MJA archives

MJA 1935: 6 July (edited extract)

Renal lithiasis

Such strides have been made during recent years in surgery of the renal tract that manoeuvres not dreamed of 25 years ago are carried out nowadays as a matter of course and with safety. Surgery of the kidney itself has reached such a stage that there appears to be little scope for genius of the enterprising surgeon. But the understanding of diseases of the kidney has kept pace neither with the invention of elaborate instruments nor

with the acquisition of skill in using them. Many diseases of the kidney are little better understood than they were 25 years ago, and even the normal physiology of the organ is not clear in all its details. It is both useful and salutary from time to time to take stock of the relationship between knowledge and practice — useful because we realise the extent of empiricism and are faced with avenues to be explored, and salutary that we be not puffed up in our own conceit and become too venturesome.

Editorial

Individualised decisions needed in PSA screening

Decisions to undergo prostate-specific antigen (PSA) screening in older men should include individualised discussion about when to pursue biopsy and treatment, according to a US study. The longitudinal cohort study assessed 295 645 men aged 65 years or older who underwent PSA screening in the Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system in 2003 and were followed up for 5 years using VA and Medicare data. In total, 8.5% of the men had an index PSA level exceeding 4.0 ng/mL. During the 5-year follow-up, 33.0% of these men had at least one prostate biopsy and 62.8% of those who did were diagnosed with prostate cancer. Of those diagnosed, 82.1% underwent treatment. “Performance of prostate biopsy decreased with advancing age and worsening comorbidity, whereas the percentage treated for biopsy-detected cancer exceeded 75% even among men 85 years or older”, the authors wrote.

JAMA Intern Med 2013; 15 April (online)
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