

“Post-Ebola syndrome” dogs survivors

Many survivors of the recent Ebola epidemic in West Africa are now returning to clinics complaining of mysterious symptoms: chronic headaches, debilitating joint pain, even eye problems that can progress to blindness, **Wired** reports. Doctors in the region have begun calling the suite of problems “post-Ebola syndrome” (PES) and they’re developing clinics devoted to caring for Ebola survivors. Until the latest epidemic, evidence of PES has been hard to find because survivors were rare. “But this most recent outbreak was unusual in the number of people who survived it — a new population to study. With 15 000 or so confirmed survivors in West Africa, epidemiologists ought to be able to nail down which symptoms are caused by Ebola infection”, rather than other suspects like Lassa fever or malaria.

Jail sentences for Bangladeshi paracetamol syrup poisoners

Six senior employees of the now-closed drug company BCI Bangladesh have been handed 10-year jail sentences for making toxic paracetamol syrup which allegedly killed hundreds of children in the 1990s, **AFP** reports. The men were charged in 2009 after it was found that the syrup had been adulterated with diethylene glycol, commonly used in the leather industry, and 10 times cheaper than the safe propylene glycol. Only one of the six men will go to jail, however, as the other five are still on the run. “Mohammed Hanif, a top paediatric nephrologist, has told **AFP** that local hospitals first started seeing children with kidney failure in late 1982. But it took another 10 years to establish the deaths were due to diethylene glycol. By then, Hanif says several thousand children had died.”

Second case of plague reported in California

Californian health officials are investigating another possible case of plague in a tourist who fell ill after visiting Yosemite National Park, the Sierra National Forest and surrounding areas — the second case in less than a month, **Associated Press** reports. “A child fell ill with the plague after camping with his family at Yosemite’s Crane Flat Campground in mid-July. The park reopened Crane Flat last week after treating it for four days with an insecticide. Park officials closed the Tuolumne Meadows Campground from noon Monday through noon Friday so authorities can treat the area with a flea-killing insecticide after two squirrels died of plague in the area.” A spokesperson for the Californian Department of Public Health said the risk to human health “remains low”.



Zebrafish doing their bit for diabetics

ScienceDaily reports that a group of American scientists are claiming to have identified 24 drug candidates that increase the number of insulin-producing cells in the pancreas, via experiments with 500 000 genetically modified zebrafish embryos. The transparent zebrafish embryos were modified so their insulin-producing pancreatic cells glowed yellow, and non-insulin-producing cells glowed red. Using high-throughput screening — using robotic equipment to dose tens of thousands of samples daily — researchers tested thousands of compounds from a Johns Hopkins library of drugs for ones that increased the amount of yellow glow. Originally reported in *eLife*, Associate Professor Jeffrey Mumm, professor of ophthalmology at the Johns Hopkins Wilmer Eye Institute, says that while more research was needed, “we think there’s potentially no limit on the diseases this screening technique could be applied to other than the human imagination”.



Pilots’ prostates can rest easier



Pilots concerned their risk of prostate cancer was elevated can breathe easier after the retraction of a recent meta-analysis that found they are at least twice as likely to develop the disease, **Retraction Watch** reports. The paper, recently published

in *Aerospace Medicine and Human Performance*, was retracted for “including inappropriate data from two studies that should be ineligible”. The paper reviewed eight studies, but included two articles that reported on prostate cancer in all United States Armed Forces servicemen, and not just pilots. First author David Raslau, from the Mayo Clinic, apologised, saying: “I was at the infancy of my training in *Aerospace Medicine* ... When I began working on this research project, the phrase ‘Air Force servicemen’ seemed equivalent to the term pilots to me. Now after having completed training in this field, I can easily see the folly of this assumption”.

Cate Swannell doi: 10.5694/mja15.n0907



Workers from the Ivory Coast's Animal Protection Ministry cull chicks to contain an outbreak of bird flu, at a farm in the village of Modeste, about 15 km east of the commercial capital of the country, Abidjan. The Ivory Coast government said that the H5N1 bird flu had spread to a third location in the country, in the latest in a series of outbreaks in West Africa.

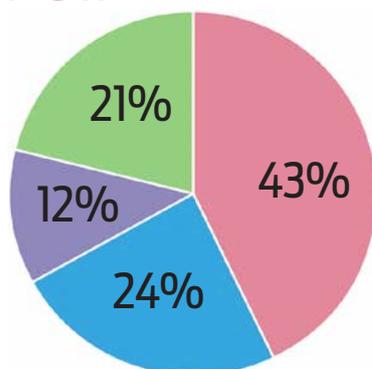
Picture: Luc Gnago/Reuters/Picture Media

MJA InSight Poll

What is the main ethical concern caused by the increasing availability of non-invasive prenatal testing?

Total respondents: 109

- Gender selection
- Test affordability
- Too complex to choose
- Pressure for "perfect" babies



Take part in next week's poll on: www.mja.com.au/insight

MJA Podcasts

Dr Angela Chiew

Dr Angela Chiew, staff specialist at the Prince of Wales Hospital in Sydney, is the coauthor of a summary of new guidelines on paracetamol poisoning published in this issue. The guidelines reflect the increased incidence of paracetamol poisoning, particularly liquid paracetamol in children under 6 years of age and in modified-dose forms of the drug.

Professor Christoph Hagemeyer



Professor Christoph Hagemeyer, head of vascular biotechnology at the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute in Melbourne, discusses his research on nanocapsule-delivered clot-busting drugs which could revolutionise the treatment of stroke and heart attack.

Podcasts are available at www.mja.com.au/multimedia/podcasts and from iTunes. Also available as videos at www.mja.com.au/multimedia

Top 5 MJA articles online since 3 August 2015

- 1) *Research*: General practitioner understanding of abbreviations used in hospital discharge letters
Patient care is compromised by GPs not understanding abbreviations in hospital discharge letters
doi: 10.5694/mja15.00224
- 2) *Clinical focus*: A new era in the treatment of multiple sclerosis
doi: 10.5694/mja14.01218
- 3) *Perspective*: Making sense of alcohol consumption data in Australia
doi: 10.5694/mja15.00151
- 4) *Editorial*: Appropriate use of oxygen in acute medicine
doi: 10.5694/mja15.00633
- 5) *Research*: Use of complementary and alternative medicines for menopausal symptoms in Australian women aged 40–65 years
doi: 10.5694/mja14.01723

Meanwhile, in MJA InSight ...

Too much do-not-do care

"Any financial sanctions need to be matched with education and information to engage clinicians and patients in supporting a culture shift towards appropriate care." — Dr Robyn Lindner, spokesperson for Choosing Wisely Australia.

<https://www.mja.com.au/insight/2015/31/too-much-do-not-do-care>

Ready for the next Ebola

"You could see health care workers being ostracised in various ways if it was known that they were treating a patient with Ebola" — Dr David Hunter, associate professor of medical ethics at Flinders University.

<https://www.mja.com.au/insight/2015/31/ready-next-ebola>

Cancer diets warning

"They offer hope to patients who have been told by their doctor that they have a risk of recurrence, or that their cancer is incurable, and that conventional medicine can offer little or no therapies to alleviate risk or prevent death" — Professor Phyllis Butow, from the University of Sydney's Psycho-Oncology Co-operative Research Group.

<https://www.mja.com.au/insight/2015/31/cancer-diets-warning>