

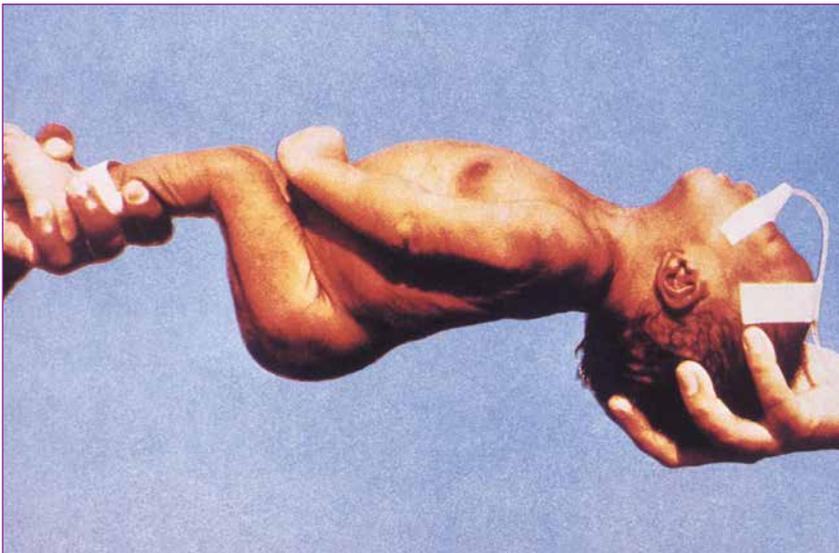
Severe head trauma mortality drops at Royal Darwin

Mortality rates for severe head trauma at the Royal Darwin Hospital are down 40% from the 79% rate reported in a study 10 years ago, according to the *ANZ Journal of Surgery*. The study reviewed clinical service between 2008 and 2013, highlighting the continuing challenge of remoteness to the delivery of emergency medicine and surgery in the Top End. Alcohol remains a major player in hospitalisation, with 57% of patients having evidence of alcohol involvement and 39% of patients with traumatic brain injury having alcohol as a factor in their presentations. Indigenous persons were also overrepresented, accounting for 39% of all procedures as well as being considerably younger by a median of 15 years than their non-Indigenous counterparts. Resident generalist surgeons are reliant upon interstate neurosurgeons, who provide ongoing education, training and support, both by way of outreach visits and by 24-hour telephone and teleradiology consultation over 2600 km away.



Maternal, neonatal tetanus eliminated in India

Maternal and neonatal tetanus has been reduced to less than one case per 1000 live births in India, according to a WHO report. Until a few decades ago, India reported 150 000 to 200 000 neonatal tetanus cases annually. According to Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia, the Indian government used a mix of existing and new programs to make elimination possible. "India's re-energized national immunization program and the special immunization weeks and the most recent 'Mission Indradhanush', helped ensure that children and pregnant women are reached with vaccines", he said. "The 'National Rural Health Mission' promoted institutional deliveries with a focus on the poor. The 'Janani Suraksha Yojana' encouraged women to give birth in a health facility." Maternal and neonatal tetanus in South-East Asia now exists in just a few districts of Indonesia.



Hazard alert for hip replacement component



The **Therapeutic Goods Administration** has issued a hazard alert for one model of the Profemur cobalt-chrome femoral neck (part number PHAC1254 – "long 8-degree varus") due to the potential for the component to fracture. The manufacturer, Surgical Specialities, is also undertaking a recall of unimplanted stock. Component fractures are extremely rare; however, the manufacturer reported that there had been 27 reports of fracture of the PHAC1254

component in the approximately 9800 units sold worldwide over the previous 5 years. Only 32 units have been sold in Australia. "If you are treating patients who have had a hip replacement and are concerned about the above issue, advise them to be alert to the potential symptoms of a femoral neck component fracture (the sudden onset of symptoms such as pain, instability and difficulty walking or performing common tasks)."

Elevated lead levels in 30 NT children



The Northern Territory Health Department has confirmed that 30 children have been found with elevated blood lead levels in three separate

locations across remote areas of the territory, the **ABC** reports. Children in Palumpa and Peppimenarti, in the West Daly region, and the Emu Point outstation, had higher than expected lead levels, probably due to contact with lead shot, used for shooting magpie geese, according to NT Health Minister John Elferink. NT Chief Health Officer Professor Dinesh Arya said that the children and their families were being interviewed to determine the cause, and all the children were receiving treatment from "specialist paediatricians".

Ebola vaccination trial extended to Sierra Leone

The **WHO** reports that a new case of Ebola virus in Sierra Leone, after the country had marked almost 3 weeks of zero cases, has set in motion the first "ring vaccination" use of the experimental Ebola vaccine in the country. A swab taken from a woman who died aged around 60, in late August in the Kambia district, tested positive for Ebola virus. "The Guinea ring vaccination trial is a Phase III efficacy trial of the VSV-EBOV vaccine. Interim results published last July show that this vaccine is highly effective against Ebola. The 'ring vaccination' strategy involves vaccinating all contacts — the people known to have come into contact with a person confirmed to have been infected with Ebola (a 'case') — and contacts of contacts."

Cate Swannell doi:10.5694/mja15.n0921



A patient is buried in the hot sand in Siwa, Egypt. In the searing heat of summer in western Egypt, at the hottest time of the day, sufferers of rheumatism, joint pain, infertility or impotence lie buried neck-deep. Locals say taking a sand bath is a natural therapy with powers to cure many medical conditions. Patients relax in the shade before treatment, which includes massages by the feet of health workers after they submerge their patients up to their neck in the desert. Patients drink mint tea in tents following the treatment.

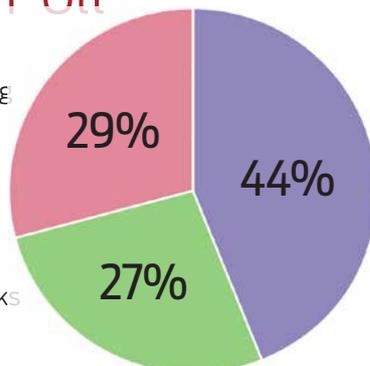
Picture: Asmaa Waguih/Reuters/Picture Media

MJA InSight Poll

Do you support punitive measures, such as withholding welfare payments, to boost childhood vaccination rates?

Total respondents: 93

- Yes – it works
- Maybe – if nothing else works
- No – no evidence it works



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

MJA Podcasts

Professor Gerard FitzGerald



Professor Gerard FitzGerald is professor of Public Health at the Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane, and former Commissioner of the Queensland Ambulance Service. He answers the question, "Are paramedics exceeding the evidence?" and reviews the changes in the paramedical profession over the past few decades.

Associate Professor James Tibballs and Dr Neera Bhatia



Associate Professor James Tibballs, deputy director of the Intensive Care Unit at Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne, and Dr Neera Bhatia, lecturer in the School of Law at Deakin University, discuss the legal changes required to permit heart procurement for transplantation after circulatory death — to accompany their Ethics and law article in this issue.



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 17 August 2015

1. Research: "Teaching by humiliation" and mistreatment of medical students in clinical rotations: a pilot study

To generate a contemporary understanding of "teaching by humiliation" as experienced by medical students in Australia
doi: 10.5694/mja15.00189

2. Editorial: It is not appropriate to dismiss inappropriate care

doi: 10.5694/mja15.00742

3. Research: Identifying and acting on potentially inappropriate care

doi: 10.5694/mja15.00025

4. Editorial: Not so innocent bystanders

doi: 10.5694/mja15.00685

5. Perspective: Medical cannabis: time for clear thinking

doi: 10.5694/mja14.01573

Meanwhile, in MJA InSight ...

CKD going undiagnosed

"We also need to be more aware of the limitations of the estimated GFR test — what it can do and what it can't do" — Professor Mark Harris, director of the Centre for Primary Health Care and Equity at the University of NSW
<https://www.mja.com.au/insight/2015/33/ckd-going-undiagnosed>

Start young to avoid dementia

"Most of the physiological changes happen before you turn 30, and after that things generally start to decline, that's the natural process" — Professor Joseph Ibrahim, consulting physician in geriatric medicine and fellow of the Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine
<https://www.mja.com.au/insight/2015/33/start-young-avoid-dementia>

CHD "tsunami" in young adults

"Mortality improvements are starting to disappear and our coronary care units seem to be full of younger patients" — Professor Steve Nicholls, South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute deputy director and Heart Foundation heart health theme leader
<https://www.mja.com.au/insight/2015/33/chd-tsunami-young-adults>