



Over 300 medical students and academic staff at James Cook University in Townsville joined the nationwide protests by medical professionals and students against the detention of children and the Border Force Act. The protest movement began with doctors at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne.

Picture: Kari Ludvigsen

Loneliness can be a killer

A new study from the United States' National Institutes of Health shows that loneliness can increase the risk of premature death in older adults by as much as 14%, **Forbes** reports. "The research team found that perceived social isolation—the 'feeling of loneliness'—was strongly linked to two critical physiological responses in a group of 141 older adults: compromised immune systems and increased cellular inflammation. Both outcomes are thought to hinge on how loneliness affects the expression of genes through a phenomenon the researchers call conserved transcriptional response to adversity, or CTRA. The longer someone experiences loneliness, the greater the influence of CTRA on the expression of genes related to white blood cells (aka, leukocytes, the cells involved in protecting us against infections) and inflammation. A lessened ability to fight infections along with a slow erosion of cellular health leaves the body open to a host of external and internal problems, some of which worsen over time with few distinct symptoms." The researchers said the results were specific to "perceived social isolation" and were unrelated to stress and depression.

Fifth retraction for former Baker IDI heart researcher

Retraction Watch reports that *JAMA* has issued a second retraction for former Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute researcher Anna Ahimastos. In September, *JAMA* announced that Ahimastos had "fabricated [records] for trial participants that did not exist" in a trial for a blood pressure drug. That trial was retracted, along with a subanalysis. The second paper — *Effect of perindopril on large artery stiffness and aortic root diameter in patients with Marfan syndrome: a randomized controlled trial* — has been retracted at the request of Ahimastos' coauthors because it included data from the first discredited paper. The retraction is the fifth for Ahimastos, who has admitted to fabricating data for studies published in the *Journal of Hypertension* and *Annals of Internal Medicine*. Three more are expected.

WHO partly to blame for Ebola deaths

An independent group of public health researchers, published in *The Lancet*, has called for big changes to the World Health Organization in the wake of the 11 000 deaths from Ebola, **Wired** reports. Suerie Moon from Harvard, a co-author of the report, said: "Ebola was really a wake-up call. If we don't get together to make reforms after something as devastating as Ebola, you really have to wonder when we will." According to *Wired* "in the early days of the Ebola outbreak, WHO's response was so lackadaisical it [messed] up even the chlorine — the disinfectant

doctors got was expired". The researchers called for a new WHO centre "dedicated to emergency outbreak response, and an independent commission that will hold the agency accountable for its actions". WHO has since convened another group of independent experts to assess its response to the Ebola outbreak.

Naegleria warning in WA

In the wake of an episode of the ABC's *Australian Story* program, the Western Australian Health Department has issued an official warning about the lethal amoeba, *Naegleria fowleri*, and the subsequent risk of Amoebic meningitis, **Outbreak News Today** reports. *Australian Story* told of the Keough family whose son Lincoln who died of the illness after playing in infested water from a garden hose. *N. fowleri* can be found in any fresh water body or poorly treated water. It thrives in warm water temperatures, between 28°C and 40°C. Amoebic meningitis only occurs if water containing active amoeba goes up the nose and then to the brain. The warning recommended swimming only in saltwater or chlorinated pools.



New president for RCPA

Dr Michael Harrison has been confirmed as the new president of the **Royal College of Pathologists of Australia**. Dr Harrison, who has been vice-president for the past 4 years, replaces Associate Professor Peter Stewart in the role. He has been a consultant pathologist with Sullivan Nicolaides Pathology for 30 years, first in their clinical chemistry and microbiology division and then as CEO and Managing Partner for the past 12 years.

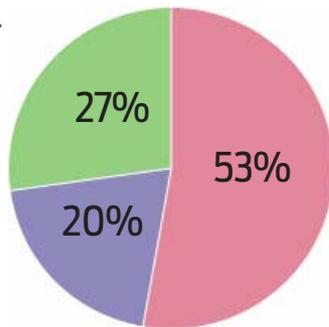
Cate Swannell doi:10.5694/mja15.n1214

MJA InSight Poll

Are medical schools obliged to ensure graduates have skills beyond clinical medicine?

Total respondents: 128

- Yes – especially when jobs are scarce
- No – clinical skills are top priority
- Maybe – could have some benefits



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

MJA Podcasts



Professor Nick Talley is the new Editor-in-Chief of the *MJA*. He is a world renowned neurogastroenterologist, and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global Research) and Laureate Professor at the University of Newcastle. He discusses what the future holds for the Journal. Also available as a video.



Professor Peter Ebeling, AO, is head of the Department of Medicine in the School of Clinical Sciences at Monash Health. He is also director of the Australian Institute of Musculoskeletal Science. He discusses osteoporosis — treatment controversies and fracture prevention in primary care. Also available as a video.



Dr Jake Barlow is a resident in the Intensive Care Unit at the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne. He discusses research he coauthored on the professional (or otherwise) behaviour of medical students online and on social media. Also available as a video.

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 26 October 2015

1) *Research*: Presentations with alcohol-related serious injury to a major Sydney trauma hospital after 2014 changes to liquor laws

Sydney's lock-out laws have a significant impact on alcohol-related injuries

doi: 10.5694/mja15.00637

2) *Perspective*: Testing times! Choosing Wisely when it comes to monitoring type 2 diabetes

doi: 10.5694/mja15.00639

3) *Reflection/Dr Ross Ingram Memorial Prize*: My journey from suit to skin

doi: 10.5694/mja15.00881

4) *Editorial*: Abortion law in Australia: it's time for national consistency and decriminalisation

doi: 10.5694/mja15.00543

5) *Reflection/MJA, MDA National Nossal Global Health Prize*: Upstream or downstream?

doi: 10.5694/mja15.00718

Meanwhile, in *MJA* InSight ...

1) *News*: Students behaving badly

<https://www.mja.com.au/insight/2015/45/students-behaving-badly>

2) *Comment*: Tim Lindsay & Harris Eyre: Career crisis

<https://www.mja.com.au/insight/2015/41/tim-lindsay-harris-eyre-career-crisis>

3) *News*: UMAT coaching "ineffective"

<https://www.mja.com.au/insight/2015/42/umat-coaching-ineffective>

4) *News*: Call to end "abortion tourism"

<https://www.mja.com.au/insight/2015/41/call-end-abortion-tourism>

5) *Comment*: John Mattick: Be brave

<https://www.mja.com.au/insight/2015/41/john-mattick-be-brave>