

Touchbase website for LGBTI health

A new website has been developed to provide targeted information on drugs, alcohol, and mental and sexual health to Australia's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and intersex communities, **BuzzFeed Australia** reports. TouchBase (www.touchbase.org.au) is a joint initiative between the Victorian AIDS Council, the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations and the Australian Drug Foundation. A unique aspect of TouchBase is its focus on drug interactions with HIV medication and hormones. "We've created TouchBase to address gaps in existing information for LGBTI people," said Victorian AIDS Council CEO Simon Ruth. "It's a unique website, because LGBTI people have different drug-using norms — we use drugs in different patterns, we have different concerns, people have been dealing with different issues throughout their lives."



New Surgeon-General for ADF

Air Vice-Marshal Tracy Smart has been named as the new Commander of Joint Health Command and Surgeon-General of the Australian Defence Force (ADF), taking over from Rear-Admiral Robyn Walker, who served in the role from 2011. Air Vice-Marshal Smart became the highest ranked lesbian officer in the ADF in 2009 when she was made Air Commodore in 2009. Her latest promotion will see her responsible for the delivery of health services and medical readiness of all ADF members, and will also provide strategic health advice and technical oversight of operational health services. She has publicly led the ADF contingent at the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras three times since 2008, the *Star Observer* reports. "One of the things that matter to me is to say gay men and lesbians are in every walk of life, including what in Australia now is a highly respected profession, like medicine and defence. The more people who do it the stronger that message is."



Google searches track infectious diseases

The United States' **National Public Radio** (NPR) reports that researchers from the University of Illinois in Chicago have teamed up with internet search giant Google to track sexually transmitted diseases. Google has given the researchers and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention access to its search data. "Researchers can mine Google data to identify search terms that spiked during previous upticks in a particular disease. Then, researchers can measure the frequency of those searches in real time to estimate the number of emerging cases. For instance, a jump in gonorrhoea might coincide with more people searching 'painful urination' or other symptoms. Search trends can be broken down by city and state, weighted by significance and combined with other data to produce a snapshot of where disease is spreading well before public health agencies report the number of verified cases."

Vaccine for dengue fever approved in Mexico

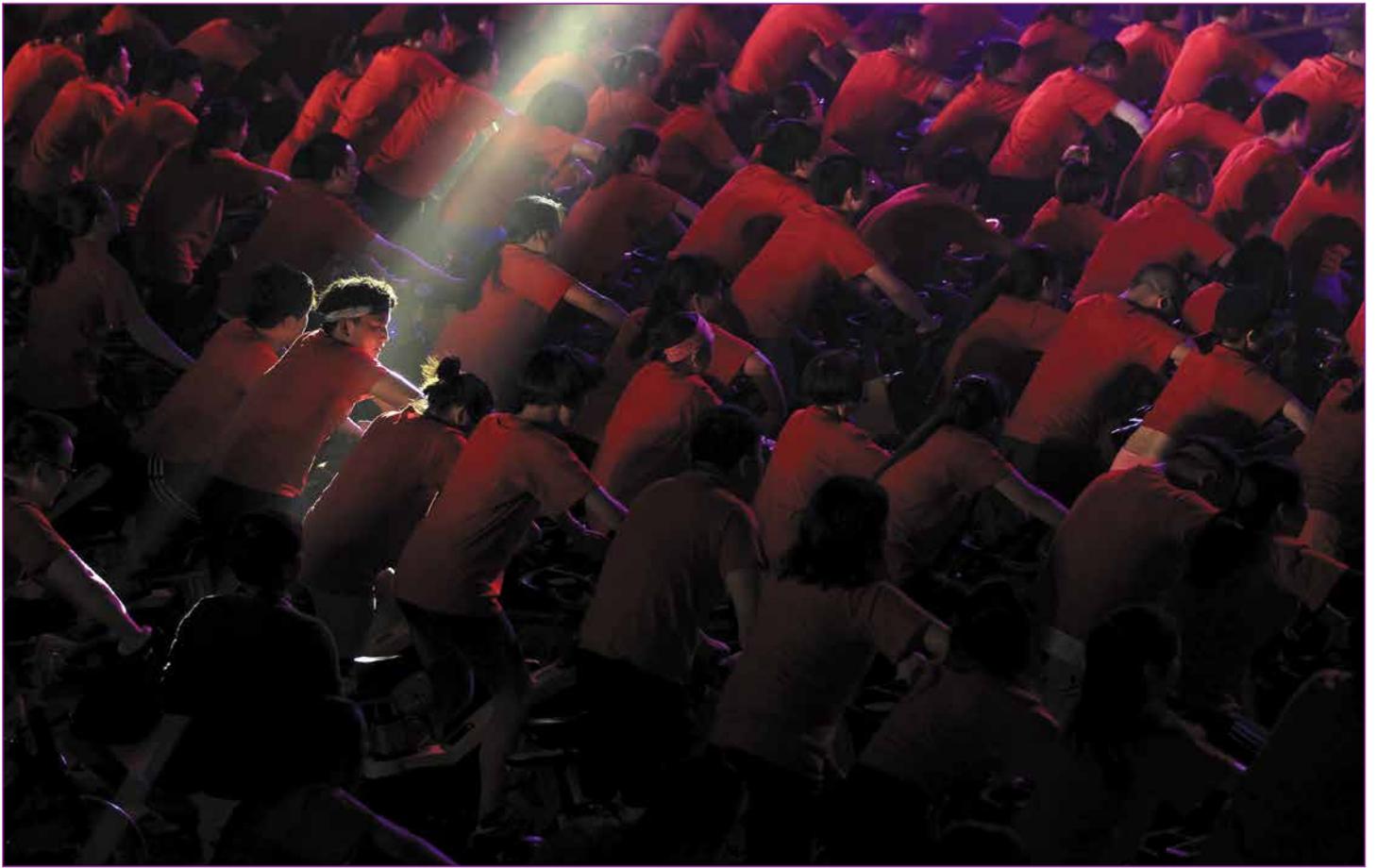
The New York Times reports that Mexico has become the first country to approve the use of a vaccine to protect people aged 9–45 years against dengue fever. Clinical trials showed the vaccine reduced the risk of developing dengue by about 60%, the NYT reported. There is no treatment for dengue, a viral disease transmitted by mosquitoes. It can cause high temperature and intense joint and muscle pain. In severe cases, it can be fatal. Estimates about the number of people sickened by dengue each year range from 50 million to 400 million. In recent years, the disease has spread out of its traditional location in developing countries in tropical areas.

Almost two-thirds of Aussies overweight or obese

Australian Bureau of Statistics data released in the 2014–15 **National Health Survey** showed that 63.4% of Australians are classified as overweight or obese, totalling 11.2 million people. A quarter of children aged 5–17 years are overweight or obese. Nevertheless, 56.2% of Australians aged 15 years and over consider themselves to be in excellent or very good health. One in nine adults experienced high or very high levels of psychological stress. "The percentage of adults consuming more alcohol than the recommended guidelines — two standard drinks per day — dropped by 2% from 2011–12 to 17.4%", the *Huffington Post* reports. "One in four men exceeded the lifetime risk guidelines compared to one in 10 women. Smoking rates among 18–44 year olds have declined by 12 percent since 2001. Rates of smoking are higher in outer regional and remote areas. Mental and behavioural conditions topped the major long-term health conditions list, with four million sufferers identified in 2014–15."

Cate Swannell

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A participant is seen under a beam of light as hundreds of people ride indoor bicycles during a campaign to promote body-building exercises at a gymnasium in Kunming, Yunnan province, China.

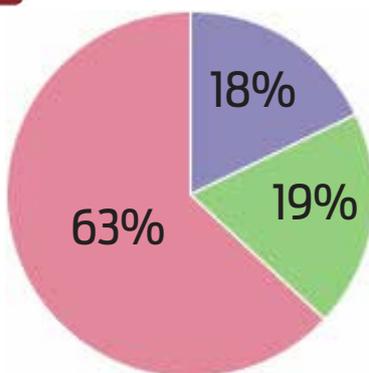
Picture: Wong Campion/Reuters/Picture Media

MJA InSight Poll

Should doctors stop giving alcohol as gifts?

Total respondents: 171

- Yes – it sends the wrong message
- No – it's a present, not a statement
- Maybe – for some people



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

MJA Podcasts



Professor Sharon Lewin is an infectious diseases physician and scientist. She is the inaugural director of the Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity at the University of Melbourne, consultant physician at the Alfred Hospital, and an NHMRC Practitioner Fellow. She was recently awarded the Peter Wills Medal for advancing Australia's international reputation within the research sector.



Professor Erwin Loh, Chief Medical Officer of Monash Health, and **Dr Jessica Dean**, a recent graduate of Monash University and a former president of the Australian Medical Students' Association,



discuss their paper on pharmaceutical companies' influence in our hospitals and how we can wean ourselves off the Big Pharma dollar.

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 for 2015

1. Perspective: *Medical cannabis: time for clear thinking* (2 February)
Professor David Pennington, University of Melbourne
doi: 10.5694/mja14.01573
2. Perspective: *Knowing when to stop antibiotic therapy* (16 February)
Professor Lyn Gilbert, Marie Bashir Institute for Infectious Diseases and Biosecurity, University of Sydney
doi: 10.5694/mja14.01201
3. Editorial: *What doctors should know about the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement* (2 March)
Dr Anne Marie Thow, Menzies Centre for Health Policy, et al
doi: 10.5694/mja14.01714
4. Clinical focus: *Acute pancreatitis: update on management* (4 May)
Dr Maryam Nesvaderani, University of Sydney, et al
doi: 10.5694/mja14.01333
5. Clinical focus/Guidelines: *Summary statement: new guidelines for the management of paracetamol poisoning in Australia and New Zealand* (7 September)
Dr Angela Chiew, Prince of Wales Hospital, et al
doi: 10.5694/mja15.00614

Top MJA InSight articles for 2015

1. *Stop antibiotics: experts* (16 February)
<https://www.mja.com.au/insight/2015/5/stop-antibiotics-experts>
2. *Sue Ieraci: Food fallacies* (23 March)
<https://www.mja.com.au/insight/2015/10/sue-ieraci-food-fallacies>
3. *Be alert for Lyme disease* (6 July)
<https://www.mja.com.au/insight/2015/25/be-alert-lyme-disease>
4. *Students behaving badly* (23 November)
<https://www.mja.com.au/insight/2015/45/students-behaving-badly>
5. *Testosterone changes "necessary"* (30 March)
<https://www.mja.com.au/insight/2015/11/testosterone-changes-necessary>