



Yonder: a diverse selection of primary care relevant research stories from beyond the mainstream biomedical literature

Advance care planning, osteopathy, HPV vaccination, and international medical graduates

Advance care planning. In recent years, there has been much focus in the medical community on improving end-of-life care. One of the most important features of achieving a 'good death' is having the opportunity to discuss your future health care at a time when you still have capacity. This process is known as advance care planning (ACP) and includes discussions about treatment goals and palliative options, as well as the completion of advanced directives. In a recent Belgian study, 36 GPs took part in five focus group discussions about their experiences of ACP.¹

The study showed that GPs have varying ways of conceptualising ACP, of which some are limited to only specific aspects of it. The authors conclude that a shared agreement on the purpose of ACP is needed to ensure it is successfully implemented and integrated into routine clinical practice.

Osteopathy. Is osteopathy a safe and effective treatment for musculoskeletal disorders and other conditions? Opinion divides sharply when it comes to this question and those who are convinced one way or another are often difficult to persuade otherwise. Nonetheless, the nature of osteopathic examinations mean that practitioners routinely see at least part of their patient's skin and may be ideally placed for melanoma recognition. A group of researchers recently sought to explore the current practice and knowledge of UK and Australian osteopaths regarding the detection of melanomas.²

Their analysis of 387 responses from the UK and 137 responses from Australia showed that the large majority of osteopaths see melanoma recognition as a potentially valuable part of their role, although the topic of melanoma formed only a small aspect of their everyday interactions with patients and colleagues. If we accept that osteopathy is at least a safe and viable management option, improving practitioners' skills in melanoma recognition may be a strategy worth testing in further experimental studies.

HPV vaccination. Doctors, and GPs in particular, are widely considered a reliable source of information about a variety of health issues including vaccination. In France, there has been much concern about the human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccination programme in the medical community and general public alike. Given the crucial role that GPs play in vaccine acceptance, a research team recently investigated their perceptions of its risk and efficacy.³ Of the 1712 participating GPs, 72% frequently recommend the vaccine to their patients. However, a substantial proportion of them were hesitant and had serious doubts about risks that were impacting their recommendation behaviour. The authors concede that a 'one size fits all' intervention is unlikely to be successful and it seems to me that better ways of providing balanced information and sharing decisions with individuals is much needed.

International medical graduates. During the present workforce crisis in UK general practice, there has been much discussion about UK doctors fleeing to Australia, where they'll apparently find employment that is less stressful and better rewarded. Yet, Australia itself has serious workforce problems and especially, the maldistribution of GPs. This has been tackled by a concerted effort to recruit international medical graduates (IMGs) to work in rural and remote Australia. In a recent paper, a group of Australian primary care researchers sought to gain a better understanding of the personality profiles of IMGs undertaking GP training in Australia.⁴

Their self-reported questionnaires were completed by both IMGs and Australian-qualified trainees to allow comparison. Although there were many similarities in personality type, including high resilience in both groups, there were also differences in other temperament and character traits. According to the authors, these are likely to reflect cultural values, prior training, and personal expectations and could be used to improve training and facilitate better integration into rural communities.

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