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Research papers this month

How disabling is depression?

The Counselling versus Antidepressants in Primary Care Study Group note that studies carried out in the US have established that depression is associated with a high degree of disability. The aims of this study were to determine the level of disability of depressed patients seen in primary care, and to investigate whether the level of disability was associated with the severity of depression. The results confirm that these patients report high levels of disability on the SF-36, and that the instrument is sensitive to the severity of mood disturbance.

Impact of a national campaign on GP education

Rix *et al* conducted a postal questionnaire survey to measure the educational impact on GPs of the Defeat Depression Campaign, run by the Royal Colleges of Psychiatrists and General Practitioners to educate GPs in recognizing and managing depression. The authors conclude that a campaign of this kind can have a useful impact, but that it needs to be supplemented by local and practice-based teaching activities.

General practice receptionists and their work

In this study, Eisner and Britten recognize that, although they occupy an important position in the front line of general practice, the role of the receptionist has not been widely researched. Using questionnaire and interviews, the authors explored general practice receptionists' ideas and feelings about their work. The results show that a receptionist's work is complex, demanding, and intense, involving a high level of commitment. The authors recommend that GPs develop a greater understanding of the receptionist's work.

Primary care units in A&E departments

The recommendations of the 1992 Tomlinson Report support a shift from secondary care to primary care. In their study of the experiences of staff participating in experimental A&E-based primary care, Freeman *et al* investigated factors encouraging or inhibiting the success of these services, and suggest directions for specific research. They conclude that, although some benefits have followed the introduction of A&E-based primary care, appropriate location of services requires clearer identification of costs to determine cost-effectiveness.

Concerns and confidence of GPs in providing telephone consultations

In recent years, the number of telephone consultations provided out of hours has increased; however, few GPs have received training in this area. By surveying GPs, using questionnaires and interviews, Foster *et al* assessed GPs' concerns and levels of confidence in providing telephone consultations. The authors found that confidence was low among GPs, and that these results demonstrate a need to consider training GPs in the skills necessary for providing telephone consultations.

GP access to imaging for children with urinary tract infections

All children with urinary tract infections (UTIs) should undergo imaging of the urinary tract, but the Royal College of Radiologists currently recommends that such children should be referred to a paediatric specialist. Polmear *et al* investigated whether direct referral by GPs would offer advantages over the traditional method. The authors conclude that, given agreed protocols, there is no basis for current recommendations that GPs should not refer children with UTIs for imaging without a prior paediatric opinion.

Improving diagnostic accuracy of bacterial pharyngitis

Sore throat or pharyngitis is an extremely prevalent condition in primary care; however, there is a diagnostic dilemma in differentiating between bacterial and non-bacterial infections for adequate use of antibiotics. Standard diagnostic procedures take too long for an immediate decision. In this study, Gulich *et al* aimed to evaluate if near patient C-reactive protein (CRP) measurement in general practice improves diagnostic accuracy. The findings show that CRP measurement can improve differentiation of bacterial and non-bacterial pharyngitis in primary care, and potentially results in a more adequate use of antibiotics.

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