

**6 July**

Diabetes Management in Primary Care —  
Module 2

The Novotel Manchester West, Worsley,

Contact: Amanda Penney

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Tel: 01925 662351

**8 July**

General Practice, The Next Generation.

National GP Registrars Conference

The Hilton Hotel, Glasgow

Contact: BMA/BMJ Conference Unit

E-mail: confunit@bma.org.uk

Tel: 020 7383 6605

**8 July**

BMA/RCGP Careers Conference

The Hilton, Glasgow

Contact: BMA/BMJ Conference Unit

E-mail: confunit@bma.org.uk

Tel: 020 7383 6605

**12 July**

MRCGP Examination Preparation Course

University of Portsmouth

Contact: Carol White

E-mail: cwhite@rcgp.org.uk

Tel: 01264 355005

**14 July**

Palliative Care Course

Park Hall Hotel, Charnock Richard,

Chorley

Contact: Debbie Leyland

E-mail: dleyland@rcgp.org.uk

Tel: 01925 662351

**14 July**

John Fry Bursary

The Royal Society of Medicine

Contact: Kelly Robinson

E-mail: gp@rsm.ac.uk

Tel: 020 7290 2984

**14 July**

The Guilty, Angry or Ashamed Patient: CBT

management techniques adapted for GPs

Drayton Psychology Ltd, Birmingham

Contact: Angela Welsh

E-mail: ask@draytonpsychology.co.uk

Tel: 0121 698 8514

**15 July**

Peripheral Injection Therapy

Royal Orthopaedic Hospital, Birmingham

Contact: Deena Harris

E-mail: info@bimm.org.uk

Tel: 01923 220999

**25 July**

MRCGP Exam Preparation Course —

Video Consultation Skills

Daresbury Park Hotel, Daresbury, Nr

Warrington, Cheshire

Contact: Anna Reid

E-mail: mersey@rcgp.org.uk

Tel: 0151 708 0865

**From the journals, May 2004****New Eng J Med Vol 350**

**1953** Nearly half of all patients with the clinical syndrome of heart failure have a normal systolic ejection fraction — so much for echocardiography being the 'gold standard'. So what is going on? This study of a small, atypical group of patients claims that it is primarily due to a failure of the ventricle to fill properly; but there are probably several other mechanisms that contribute to 'diastolic' heart failure.

**2029** Most palliative care doctors claim that a wish for euthanasia is simply an appeal for better symptom control. Here is a thoughtful piece that argues otherwise.

**2033** Homocysteine has got itself a bad name from being associated with cardiovascular disease. Here it is coupled with osteoporosis. But is it really bad, or has it just fallen into dubious company?

**2123** A piece that bids us to measure blood pressure in all patients over the age of ... 3 years. If they cry while you inflate the cuff, just give them a raspberry-flavoured Polypill Junior chew.

**2159** 'What a heel!' they say as you inject local steroid for their plantar fasciitis: some alternatives are discussed in this review.

**2239** Perfectly Stupid Attributes (PSA) — a test for prostate cancer that misses 15% of cancers at the usual cut-off value; and brings to light many others that would never harm the patient.

**Lancet Vol 363**

**1432** 'I say, Jeeves, been at the bone marrow again?' Put some precursor cells from bone marrow into the brain, and off they go, turning into neurons, astrocytes and microglia.

**1490** Evidence-based surgery is coming into its own with studies like this one of carotid endarterectomy: large, meticulously conducted, modest and practical in its conclusions.

**1525** But will surgeons take any notice of the evidence? Looking at the effect of NICE guidelines on rates of wisdom tooth extraction and uncemented hip replacement, this study concludes no.

**1579** A 'systematic review of cannabis' sounds like a planeload of teenagers arriving in Amsterdam. But no, man, this is a joint attempt to weed out the hash and light up the smart gear in the spliffature, and it draws a well good conclusion.

**1607** Could this be the best news yet for multiple sclerosis? A drug which cleared 40% of white matter lesions in 6 months — simvastatin 80 mg.

**1724** Are randomised controlled trials the gold standard of evidence? If you like this kind of debate then there is plenty in this *Lancet* for you — another paper on page 1728, and an editorial on page 1660.

**1751** Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) probably kill as many people by tipping them into heart failure as by making them bleed: avoid the lot in heart failure, including rofecoxib. For celecoxib, await more news.

**JAMA Vol 291**

**2086** Bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG) is the bovine germ used to prevent tuberculosis for many decades: but does it work? An ethically dubious study from the 1940s randomised some Alaskans and American Indians to BCG, some to placebo: there was 50% less active TB in the active vaccine group over the next 50 years.

**2100** Cone biopsy of the cervix by laser or diathermy increases the risk of preterm delivery.

**2204** Does a parental history of cardiovascular disease really matter now that we can measure so many other risk factors? Yes, it does, says the oracle of Framingham.

**2335** Bone marrow transplantation is close to dying and coming back to life, and the psychological and physical effects are profound and long lasting — at least 3–5 years, in this study.

**2433** Aspirin prevents breast cancer — the hormone-responsive type, anyway; and the same probably goes for other NSAIDs.

**2476** Palliative care for heart failure — a neglected area, so this piece is welcome.

**Electronic journals**

Cynical Luddite though he may sometimes seem, Theophrastus is actually a tireless nerd when it comes to scanning the medical literature. The contents of the BioMed Central (BMC) journals alone would provide worthy material for his column many times over. *BMC Family Medicine*, *Medicine*, *Medical Ethics* and *Palliative Care* are all must-scan journals for those interested in such things. *BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine* can be more variable, but you mustn't miss a study (3: 6) of the aphrodisiac effects of nutmeg and clove on male mice. Next Christmas, don't leave the mince pies out, unless you want to be overrun with randy mice.

**Plant of the Month: *Hypericum olympicum* 'Sulphureum'**

A relative of the medicinal St John's wort which forms a big low tuft of delightful soft yellow flowers against greyish leaves.