



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

Workplace violence, childhood obesity, somatoform disorders and 'selfies'

Workplace violence. Emergency primary care typically takes place in settings far more isolated than hospitals and often in patient's own homes. It also generally comprises far fewer staff than secondary care and in contrast with conventional primary care, involves unknown patients. Although previous research has shown that incidents of aggression are common, most studies have focused on patient characteristics and the work environment.

A Norwegian team recently conducted a focus group study with nurses and doctors about their experiences of violence in emergency primary care, exploring particularly patient-professional interactions.¹ The three major themes regarding these interactions were unmet needs, involuntary assessment, and unsolicited touch. The authors conclude that aggression is likely to arise in situations where patients' needs or personal borders are invalidated and believe the struggle for recognition in the interaction is particularly important. They suggested these should be better covered in professional education programmes.

Childhood obesity. The prevention of childhood obesity is undoubtedly an important public health priority across the developed world. What is less clear, however, is exactly what role primary care should take, with contrasting opinions in the medical community about whether it should be the main setting for interventions. A recent Canadian study gathered the perspectives of primary care clinicians and parents of children aged 2–5 years.²

One key barrier was that children of this age aren't routinely seen in primary care as they have completed immunisations and are not yet at school age. As well as this gap in care, other barriers include the sensitivity of the topic and importantly, lack of time. However, trust and existing relationships with clinicians were facilitators. The authors conclude that there was sufficient interest to develop pilots and test interventions. Although primary care is often considered an appropriate setting for such interventions,

the lack of consideration of opportunity costs is frustrating, particularly given the unprecedented pressures it faces within the NHS and other health systems.

Somatoform disorders. Although a large proportion of symptoms in primary care remain 'medically unexplained', somatoform disorders are thought to be underdiagnosed. Although some may contest the value of such diagnostic labels, a German research team sought to identify potential barriers to diagnosis in primary care, completing a systematic review of qualitative and quantitative data.³ They included 42 studies and identified a staggering total of 379 barriers, which they fit into 16 thematic categories. This vast range of barriers reiterates the complexity of the diagnostic process. From a clinical perspective, the authors reiterate the importance of validating symptoms and providing satisfactory explanations for patients' complaints. However, I personally remain unconvinced that a diagnostic tag is likely to be of any real benefit to patients.

'Selfies.' A selfie, for anyone that hasn't yet heard the term, is a self-portrait photograph typically taken with a camera phone and shared online through social networking sites. Indeed, it is one important way that social media has transformed teenage girls' peer interactions and possibly, their understanding of beauty. Researchers from Singapore recently conducted an interview study aiming to uncover the meanings embedded in teenage girls' use of selfies to present and compare themselves against others on social media.⁴ They found that feelings of low self-esteem and insecurity underpinned their efforts in edited self-presentation and quest for peer recognition. Peers played multiple roles that included imaginary audiences, judges, vicarious learning sources, and comparison targets in shaping teenage girls' perceptions and presentation of beauty. The authors sensibly advocate that social media literacy should be an essential subject in mainstream education.

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