



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

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Social workers, early menopause, patient access to records, and kangaroo mother care

Social workers. Many older people struggle to safely manage their medications. A research team from the US recently sought to find out whether social workers could play a role in addressing complex medication management concerns by developing and evaluating a bespoke medication safety curriculum for them.¹ They identified six themes illustrating the social workers' many roles in supporting medication management: referrals; communication; access to medicines; social determinants of health; engagement; and caregiver support. The authors conclude that social workers bring unique perspectives and skills to aid in medication management, and explore how this might be operationalised. Given the growing and valuable contributions that pharmacists are making to UK primary care, it seems less likely to fly here.

Early menopause. Early menopause can occur spontaneously or following medical treatment and affects up to 10% of women. An Australian research team aimed to increase understanding of women's lived experiences of this by interviewing 30 women aged between 28 and 51 years.² They found that women have to come to terms with its often harsh consequences — fertility loss, menopausal symptoms, long-term health effects, impacts on sexuality, and often a sense of no longer fitting with socially and culturally-shaped ideas on 'youth' and attractiveness. The authors suggest clinicians can improve their care of these women by making use of new digital resources including online diagnostic and management algorithms, acknowledging potential distress, and recognising that the impact of the condition can extend to women's social identities, relationships, and work.

Patient access to records. A research team from Yorkshire recently completed a study to explore why patients in England choose to use the 'Patient Online' electronic personal health record.³ Analysing responses from 136 participants, they identified that features that encouraged its use included

it being seen as easy to access, secure, quick, user-friendly, and convenient. However, patients identified many reasons for not using it, which were categorised into five themes: concerns about privacy and security; a lack of awareness of Patient Online; challenges regarding internet and computers; perceived characteristics of non-users; and preference for personal contact. They conclude by emphasising the importance of reassuring the public about privacy and security in particular, although their suggestion that 'GPs should ease registration with the system and provide manuals, training sessions, and technical support' seems naive and fanciful to say the least.

Kangaroo mother care. Around the world, millions of children are born preterm each year, and complications that arise from prematurity are the leading causes of under-five mortality. 'Kangaroo mother care' (KMC) has been around for decades in parts of the world with overcrowded and poorly resourced neonatal units. It consists of continuous skin-to-skin contact with the mother, exclusive breastfeeding, and early discharge from hospital in the kangaroo position with frequent home visits by health workers. Despite considerable evidence showing its effectiveness, it has not been widely implemented in Ethiopia, and a recent study sought to understand why.⁴ They found missed opportunities in identifying preterm babies, poor referral systems, mixed community perceptions about prematurity, and challenges in initiating and continuing KMC logistically, presenting an 'all inclusive' model to link health workers with local communities and improve implementation.

Podcast of the month. Although I'm really not an enthusiast of the exploding 'true crime' genre, the RedHanded podcast is well researched, engaging, and unexpectedly funny! <https://redhandedpodcast.com>

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