



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

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Migrant workers, compassionate touch, puberty, and Happify

Migrant workers. Since the global financial crisis of 2008, economic insecurity has led to a sustained increase in international migration to countries with higher income levels. A recent study investigated the patterns of work and working conditions of immigrants living in southern Spain.¹ Four employment sectors were most commonly occupied by the immigrants interviewed, including caregiving and food service for women, and agriculture and construction for men. Most immigrants were from Latin America, unemployed or working part-time jobs, and not hired under an employment contract. Most worked in low-qualified jobs and were exposed to occupational hazards. Given the further economic, political, and social disruption caused by COVID-19, the outlook for these vulnerable and marginalised groups sadly looks bleak.

Compassionate touch. The nursing literature contains several decades of research about the role of touch in health care, suggesting that it can paradoxically be both beneficial and problematic. A recent Australian study found that patients perceive the touch of the nurse to be an act of compassion that conveys comfort and safety.² It found that touch allowed for the establishment of an authentic connection between nurse and patient, and nurses use touch to express compassion. Patients were comforted by touch and valued it. The authors conclude that nurses use touch to create a bond with patients and were aware of the different meanings of touch. They suggest that avoiding touch, being wary of touch, or considering touch taboo robs patients of valuable compassion moments. These findings are especially pertinent as we negotiate a 'new normal' after COVID-related physical distancing measures.

Puberty. Little is known about the experiences of young females with cerebral palsy and intellectual disability as they transition through puberty because they have largely been excluded from research studies, prompting a team from Boston, US, to examine this topic by interviewing parents of daughters aged 14–24 years.³ Despite

homogeneity in functional ability, there was marked variation in parental perception of the significance of puberty for their daughters. Families often learned about reproductive health from informal social networks. Although families acknowledged the need for sexual abuse screening, there was little consensus about how to do it, and most denied that their own daughter could ever be abused. The authors suggest that healthcare workers should be more proactive in asking about menarche and puberty, and that further work is needed to develop best practices to assess and manage safeguarding risks.

Happify. Although loneliness has been widely recognised as an important public health issue for over a decade, the social distancing restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic have caused concerns about it to rise sharply. Happify Health is a digital intervention platform that addresses mental health and loneliness by drawing on several theoretical approaches including cognitive behavioural therapy, mindfulness-based stress reduction, and positive psychology. A recent study explored how adults (aged 18–64 years) who expressed wanting to be more connected to others experienced and reacted to this intervention.⁴ It found that participants showed evidence of adopting skills that they used to address their loneliness, particularly mindfulness and gratitude, and then used these skills to shift toward more active coping strategies following the intervention, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although clearly not a panacea for loneliness for all sorts of reasons, this digital intervention nonetheless looks promising.

Podcast of the month. If you're missing international travel this summer and want some laugh-out-loud escapism, check out Alan Carr's *Life's a Beach*: <https://alancarr.net/podcast>

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