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Bristol, N. (2008). New hopes for tackling HIV/AIDS in the USA. *The Lancet, 372 (9653), 1869.* New figures recently highlighted the fact that efforts to prevent HIV/AIDS in the USA are falling short. But health advocates are hopeful that President-elect Barack Obama’s plans, which include launching a national HIV/AIDS strategy, will turn things around. Nellie Bristol reports.

David, R. (2008). The art of healing in ancient Egypt: a scientific reappraisal. *The Lancet, 372 (9652), 1802.* The ancient Egyptians developed one of the earliest recorded systems of medical treatment. Over the past 100 years, knowledge and appraisal of these procedures have been largely based on evidence provided by twelve documents inscribed on papyrus: the so-called medical papyri. One manuscript is written in Egyptian hieroglyphs, whereas the others are in the Hieratic script, a cursive form of hieroglyphs. The papyri date between about 1820 BCE and 250 ACE, although some may be copies of earlier works.

Gilman, S.L. (2008). Freud and the making of psychoanalysis. *The Lancet, 372 (9652), 1799.* Everything bad and good about modern physics is either Albert Einstein’s fault or to his credit. Such an account of modern physics, which ignores everyone from Ernest Rutherford to Max Planck, from Marie Curie to J Robert Oppenheimer to Lise Meitner, seems highly far-fetched. Yet that is precisely, as George Makari shows, what happens in the complex history of psychoanalysis: all of psychoanalysis became Sigmund Freud for good or for ill—only Freud as original genius or charlatan.

Godsland, S. (2008). Child-bearing in China. *The Lancet, 372 (9652), 1800.* In May, 2008, China’s one-child policy was brought savagely into the light when a powerful earthquake shook Sichuan province, robbing towns of a generation of (only) children. In a welcome move, local authorities in affected towns relaxed one-child restrictions for the bereaved and furious parents. But such a move was unprecedented in a country where the policy has become entrenched.

Hayward, P. (2008). Darwin on display. *The Lancet, 372 (9653), 1871.* In the grand edifice of the UK’s Natural History Museum, through hall after hall of leviathan skeletons of extinct reptiles, the two dead mockingbirds lying prone in a glass cabinet seem a humble choice for the entrance to the Darwin exhibition. But as 2009, the bicentennial of Charles Darwin’s birth and 150th anniversary of the publication of *On The Origin of Species*, approaches, these two specimens, collected by Darwin himself, form a fitting illustration of the deceptive simplicity of the idea of evolution by natural selection.

Kapp, C. (2008). Malcolm and Elizabeth Molyneux: making better health in Malawi. *The Lancet, 372 (9653), 1873.* “Dream team” is a fitting description for Malcolm and Elizabeth Molyneux, who have helped uplift Malawi’s health services through their clinical research, care of patients, and training of a new generation of doctors. The British husband and wife team arrived in 1974 to work in a mission clinic, then moved to the national hospital and, with the exception of an 11-year stint in Liverpool, have been in the African nation ever since. Tropical disease specialist Malcolm has pioneered research into malaria, while Elizabeth is an authority on paediatric cancer, meningitis, and accident and emergency services in a resource-poor setting.

Raizman, N. (2008). Questions of identity. *The Lancet, 372 (9653), 1872.* The unreliable narrator is a familiar trope to every physician who has ever taken a patient’s history. Patients deny and hedge, they rationalise, they are hazy on details, they tell you what you want to hear or what they think you want to hear, they project, they tangle their emotions in their experience of the physical, they believe things that make little sense; on occasion, they are actually delusional. In literature, too, the unreliable narrator has a long and illustrious history. Literature that explores the nature of the self, first genuinely, with a nod to the conflicts of metaphysics and psychoanalytical tropes, and then ironically, with a keen eye towards the uncertain nature of subjectivity and the myth of objectivity, is perhaps the playing field on which modernism and postmodernism have clashed most profoundly.

Pickering, N. (2008). The importance of not being complementary. *The Lancet, 372 (9653), 1874.* The Building is one of Philip Larkin’s great poems. The building of the title is a hospital, although never identified explicitly as such. In the course of the poem Larkin describes it as the sort of place that we all know we are going to die in, sooner or later. And although some critics have found a sense of hope in the poem, in the crowds of visitors who come with their “wasteful, weak, propitiatory flowers” each evening, the hospital still comes across as a fearful
place. The Building echoes an earlier Larkin poem in which ambulances are presented as mobile reminders of how close we all are to death.


What with the knighthood, the Regius Chair of Medicine at Oxford University, and the Presidency of the Academy of Medical Sciences, to ask John Bell if being a Canadian by birth—and still very much by accent—has hindered his UK medical career would be faintly absurd. So, conversely, has it brought any advantages? Yes, he says. For one thing he’s sidestepped traditional British pigeonholing based on schooling, parentage, and the like. And for another there’s the can-do, entrepreneurial “frontier spirit” that tends to go with Canadian nationality: “This has got to work, so let’s be optimistic and make it work.

**ARTICLES**


Our results suggest that tesofensine 0.5 mg might have the potential to produce a weight loss twice that of currently approved drugs. However, these findings of efficacy and safety need confirmation in phase III trials.


This cell-mediated immunity vaccine did not prevent HIV-1 infection or reduce early viral level. Mechanisms for insufficient efficacy of the vaccine and the increased HIV-1 infection rates in subgroups of vaccine recipients are being explored.


Genetic variation in SERPING1 significantly alters susceptibility to age-related macular degeneration. SERPING1 encodes the C1 inhibitor, which has a crucial role in inhibition of complement component 1 (C1) and might implicate the classic pathway of complement activation in this disease.


INTEREST established non-inferior survival of gefitinib compared with docetaxel, suggesting that gefitinib is a valid treatment for pretreated patients with advanced non-small-cell lung cancer.


Consistent with previous trials, the MRKAd5 HIV-1 gag/pol/nef vaccine was highly immunogenic for inducing HIV-specific CD8+ T cells. Our findings suggest that future candidate vaccines have to elicit responses that either exceed in magnitude or differ in breadth or function from those recorded in this trial.


A six-dose regimen of artemether-lumefantrine with the new dispersible formulation is as efficacious as the currently used crushed tablet in infants and
SEMINAR


Age-related macular degeneration is the leading cause of blindness in elderly populations of European descent. The most consistent risk factors associated with this ocular condition are increasing age and cigarette smoking. Genetic investigations have shown that complement factor H, a regulator of the alternative complement pathway, and LOC387715/HtrA1 are the most consistent genetic risk factors for age-related macular degeneration. Although the pathogenesis of this disease is unknown, oxidative stress might have an important role.

SERIES


China's current strategy to improve how health services are paid for is headed in the right direction, but much more remains to be done. The problems to be resolved, reflecting the setbacks of recent decades, are substantial: high levels of out-of-pocket payments and cost escalation, stalled progress in providing adequate health insurance for all, widespread inefficiencies in health facilities, uneven quality, extensive inequality, and perverse incentives for hospitals and doctors. China’s leadership is taking bold steps to accelerate improvement, including increasing government spending on health and committing to reaching 100% insurance coverage by 2010.


We created a comprehensive set of health-system performance measurements for China nationally and regionally, with health-system coverage and catastrophic medical spending as major indicators. With respect to performance of health-care delivery, China has done well in provision of maternal and child health services, but poorly in addressing non-communicable diseases. For example, coverage of hospital delivery increased from 20% in 1993 to 62% in 2003 for women living in rural areas. However, effective coverage of hypertension treatment was only 12% for patients living in urban areas and 7% for those in rural areas in 2004.

CASE REPORT


Between 1992 and 1996, a man from the UK, in his early 40s, worked in Bosnia. He had been well, except for his longstanding asthma, nasal polyps, and eczema, but developed persistent abdominal pains and periodic fatigue, unrelated to exertion, for which no medical cause was identified. In 1997, the patient had a cholecystectomy for right hypochondrial tightness, and a Nissen’s fundoplasty for Barrett’s oesophagus. However, his fatigue and discomfort became so severe that he retired involuntarily.


In July, 2006, a 69-year-old woman was in our foot clinic, when she mentioned that her right knee had been painful and swollen for 2 months. The swelling had gradually increased; the patient recalled no injury. Her type 2 diabetes was poorly controlled: we saw her regularly in the foot clinic for a neuropathic ulcer, which was healing slowly; she had had several laser treatments for bilateral diabetic maculopathy.

VIEWPOINT


A patient of mine, Kofi, once asked me, “Who is Jack Bauer?” I felt a little queasy because the patient, question, and answer all shared a common element, torture. I first met Kofi when I was a resident, only 1 year into my training in assessing survivors of torture who were seeking asylum at the Bronx Human Rights Clinic, New York, USA. The application of these people can be strengthened by medical examination of the physical and mental sequelae of torture. Before fleeing his country, Kofi endured several brutal detentions, as part of government persecution of his ethnic group.