abstract of

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Amnesia, political ambition, and canned tuna. R CM Ho, Stanley YW Lam, Evangeline SL Tan, Pamela MY Ng, and Anselm Mak.

On the eve of World Leprosy Day, Talha Burki, reviews progress in the global fight against the disease, and finds that far from nearing eradication, much remains to be done to control leprosy. Jan 25 marks World Leprosy Day—an event that aims to publicise an ancient disease that still affects thousands of people worldwide.

**PERSPECTIVES**


“Let the more loving one be me.” W H Auden, *The More Loving One*. I lead her across the living room, holding her hand behind my back, so that I can navigate the two of us between chairs, sofas, end tables, over Persian rugs, through the passageway and into the kitchen. I help her find and carefully place herself in a chair, one of four at the oval-shaped oak table. She turns the wrong way, forcing the chair outward; I push her legs around and in, under the table’s edge. The sun streams through the bank of windows.


Last year as chrysophiles and chrysophobes prepared to do battle once more over UN plans to restrict the worldwide asbestos trade, Defending the Indefensible put the ruthless tactics of global asbestos industry into a historical context. By chronicling the evolution of knowledge about, and the corporate response to, asbestos, Jock McCulloch and Geoffrey Tweedale explain the inexplicable: why most of the world’s people live in countries where asbestos products are still used.


Rarely has a South African Cabinet reshuffle been greeted with such enthusiasm and expectation as the appointment last September of Barbara Hogan to Minister of Health, when she took over from her discredited predecessor Manto Tshabalala-Msimang. Hogan has faced a baptism of fire, having to confront the spread of cholera from Zimbabwe over the South African border, which has added to the already daunting challenges facing the country’s health system. Many think she has passed the 100-day test with flying colours.


The Tall Man is a European figure drawn in the 19th century by Australian Aboriginal people in Far North Queensland, among ancestral cave paintings 15,000 years old. The Tall Man is also a shadowy being who comes down from the hills of North Queensland’s Palm Island late at night, wreaking havoc on unwary residents. Both these images are deftly woven into journalist Chloe Hooper’s compelling story of the very tall police sergeant Christopher Hurley, acquitted in July, 2007, of the manslaughter of Aboriginal man Mulrunji Doomadgee on Palm Island.

**SPECIAL REPORT**


Norwegian doctors Mads Gilbert and Erik Fosse, who have worked on and off in Gaza for over 20 years, report on the unfolding crisis and conditions inside the Al-Shifa hospital, Gaza City. From our arrival in Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City on the afternoon of Dec 31, 2008, until this morning, we have witnessed the most horrific war injuries in men, women, and children of all ages in numbers almost too large to comprehend. The wounded, dying, and dead have streamed into the overcrowded hospital in endless convoys of ambulances and private cars, and wrapped in blankets in the caring arms of others.


Medical clinics in Gaza are struggling to treat an overwhelming number of casualties following Israel’s 3-week assault on the isolated enclave. Jan McGirk reports from Jerusalem. The best-equipped medical facility in the Gaza Strip resembled a charnal house. Corpses were strewn on the floor after morgue refrigerators inside Al-Shifa—a 585-bed hospital in Gaza City—were packed to capacity in the first week of the Israeli military offensive in the Palestinian enclave. Doctors were reduced to treating the injured on the floor and doing surgery by flashlight.

**WORLD REPORT**


South Africa’s ruling African National Congress has singled out health as one of the top five priorities for the next government. With good reason. Clare Kapp reports from Cape Town. President-in-waiting Jacob Zuma addressed 60,000 adoring supporters at the launch of the African National Congress’ (ANC) election manifesto on Jan 10,vaunting the social progress that has been made since the party came to power. He singled out health as one of the top five priorities for the next government. With good reason. Clare Kapp.


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Now closely associated with the newspaper industry, tabloid had its origins in the pharmaceutical industry. Coined by Sir Henry Wellcome (1853–1936), it became the registered trademark of Burroughs Wellcome & Co, the company Wellcome had co-founded with fellow American Silas Mainville Burroughs in London in 1880.


In an age of exploding biological knowledge, why bother with the study of medical history, ethics, and literature? What role, if any, should these areas of study play in the formation of a doctor? These questions take us back to a time when such specialised fields would have been ludicrous, or at least redundant. Before the 19th century, medicine was not even vaguely a science, but rather an amalgam of prescientific, traditional, and humanistic approaches to the sick. It would have made no sense to teach medical humanities per se, for medicine was in good part constituted by its venerable history, its ethics, and its more-or-less codified responses to human suffering.


Richard Holmes is best known for his biographies of the Romantic poets of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, notably Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Percy Bysshe Shelley. In The Age of Wonder he turns his attention to a group of men (and one woman) whom to 21st-century eyes would seem initially very far removed from these poets: explorers, adventurers, and scientists—although the latter word had not yet been invented. But as his account proceeds, the affinities between this seemingly disparate group and the poets becomes clearer.


When I was a student at Uganda’s Makerere University Medical School, about 28 years ago, the teaching of clinical research ethics was minimal to none. I learned research ethics on the job so to speak. A lot has changed since then. Evidence-based medicine, particularly derived from randomised trials, has become critical to clinical care and the solution of public-health problems. We have, therefore, witnessed changes in the medical curriculum with increased emphasis on the teaching of clinical research ethics.

ARTICLES


Overall, public and private sector prices for originator and generic medicines were substantially higher than would be expected if purchasing and distribution were efficient and mark-ups were reasonable. Policy options such as promoting generic medicines and alternative financing mechanisms are needed to increase availability, reduce prices, and improve affordability.


Although treatment success with either step-up or step-down treatment is similar, the step-up strategy is more cost effective at 6 months for initial treatment of patients with new onset dyspeptic symptoms in primary care.


Similar to molecular genetic studies, we showed evidence that schizophrenia and bipolar disorder partly share a common genetic cause. These results challenge the current nosological dichotomy between schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, and are consistent with a reappraisal of these disorders as distinct diagnostic entities.


Early postnatal prophylactic GM-CSF corrects neutropenia but does not reduce sepsis or improve survival and short-term outcomes in extremely preterm
neonates.

ARTICLES


Spousal violence increases the likelihood of single and repeated fetal loss. A large proportion of risk for recurrent fetal mortality is attributable to spousal violence and, therefore, is potentially preventable. Our findings support the idea of routine prenatal screening for spousal violence in the African setting, a region with the highest rate of fetal death in the world.


In patients with locally advanced or high-risk local prostate cancer, addition of local radiotherapy to endocrine treatment halved the 10-year prostate-cancer-specific mortality, and substantially decreased overall mortality with fully acceptable risk of side-effects compared with endocrine treatment alone. In the light of these data, endocrine treatment plus radiotherapy should be the new standard.


The CYP2C19*2 genetic variant is a major determinant of prognosis in young patients who are receiving clopidogrel treatment after myocardial infarction.

SERIES


This article forms part of a six-part Series on trade and health, and sets the stage for this Series by analysing key aspects of the relationship between trade and health. The Series takes stock of this relation and provides timely analysis of the key challenges facing efforts to achieve an appropriate balance between trade and health across a diverse range of issues. This introductory article reviews how trade and health have risen and expanded on global policy agendas in the past decade in unprecedented ways, describes how trade and health issues are respectively governed in international relations, examines the ongoing search for policy coherence between the two policy spheres, and highlights the topics of the remaining articles in the Series.


In medical literature, child maltreatment is considered as a public-health problem or an issue of harm to individuals, but less frequently as a violation of children’s human rights. Public-health approaches emphasise monitoring, prevention, cost-effectiveness, and population strategies; protective approaches concentrate on the legal and professional response to cases of maltreatment. Both approaches have been associated with improvement in outcomes for children, yet maltreatment remains a major global problem.

VIEWPOINT


Countries from WHO’s European region met in Tallinn, Estonia in June, 2008, to discuss a new way of thinking about health systems. For the past three decades,
much of the debate on health care in Europe has been dominated by cost containment. Informed by detailed background analyses,1,2 a 2 year consultation process began by asking “what is a health system actually for?” The answer depends on who is asking the question. For some, a health system is a means of redistributing society’s resources—from healthy to sick and from rich to poor.

Because of the duty to promote and protect prisoners’ wellbeing, physicians who work in prisons should monitor human rights during their medical work.1,2 They can discern signs of abuse even when they have not witnessed the abuse. Also, they can see prisoners who have been concealed from customary monitors, such as delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross. Furthermore, they belong to national and international communities that include advocates for humane prison health care and for stopping torture.

Although a single species, more than 2000 serovars of Salmonella enterica have been identified, including Typhi, Typhimurium, and Enteritidis. S enterica var Typhi (or S typhi) causes invasive disease, which is particularly common in Asia, whereas non-typhoidal salmonellae are important causes of food-borne infections and cause mainly gastroenteritis in developed countries.1 Far less recognised is the disease burden in tropical African countries. Non-typhoidal salmonellae (mainly S typhimurium and S enteritidis) have long been a common cause of invasive disease in children, especially during rainy seasons, consistently associated with young age (most cases present between 6 months and 3 years of age), anaemia, malnutrition, and of late with HIV infection.

**CASE REPORT**

On January 11, 2008, a 23-year-old Estonian woman, who had been working in the UK for over 2 years, was admitted to our emergency department. For 2 days, she had had a flu-like illness, with breathlessness, haemoptysis, and pleuritic chest pain. She was now finding it difficult to breathe. She was 32 weeks’ pregnant with her first child. She had had no recent contacts with health care, other than routine antenatal assessments.

In May, 2008, a 59-year-old accounts officer, who worked for a shipping line called MOL, sat down and missed his chair, landing on the floor. He did not seem seriously injured, but developed low back pain, so was taken to our emergency department. Examining doctors found no evidence of physical injury; radiography of the lumbar spine showed no abnormality. However, the patient constantly spoke of his lower back pain. He believed himself to be in his office, and could not recall his name. Blood tests and electrocardiography gave normal results; the patient was not taking any prescribed or illicit drugs, and had no medical history of note.