



Reuters

Yoga instructor Tao Porchon-Lynch at her yoga class in Hartsdale, New York, last month. At 93 years old, Porchon-Lynch holds the Guinness World Record for oldest yoga teacher. A Cochrane review published last year found that “3D exercises” such as yoga and tai chi had some positive effects on balance among older people.

From the NHMRC

Rolling out a national approach to single ethics review

The duplication of ethics review is a longstanding issue in the research community and is seen to cause delays in the commencement of research and to place additional pressures on valuable research funds (*Med J Aust* 2010; 192: 292-293; *Med J Aust* 2009; 191: 280-282). Chapter 5.3 of the NHMRC (National Health and Medical Research Council) *National statement on ethical conduct in human research*, 2007 recognises these concerns and encourages the minimisation of duplicate ethics review. At the request of the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, the NHMRC has spent the past 4 years working with states, territories and the university and private sectors to develop tools and guidance material to support streamlined ethics review. The outcomes of the Harmonisation of Multi-centre Ethical Review (HoMER) initiative can be seen on the NHMRC

human research ethics portal (<http://hrep.nhmrc.gov.au>). This initiative answers industry concerns about duplicate ethics reviews hampering clinical research in Australia.

Under HoMER, the NHMRC developed a National Certification Scheme for institutional ethics review processes, with the goal of increasing confidence in the quality of the processes. Thirty-eight institutions are now certified, representing 43 human research ethics committees. To facilitate the adoption of best practice, the NHMRC has published guidance material on monitoring and research governance aspects of multicentre human research on the portal. The portal also includes a list of certified institutions and standard participant information and consent forms.

The NHMRC is working with Australian states and territories, private hospitals and universities to facilitate implementation of HoMER.

Universities, private hospitals and research institutes can already accept single ethics reviews for research, and the NHMRC encourages researchers seeking approval of a multicentre study to contact each proposed site to see if they are in a position to accept an ethics review from an NHMRC-certified institution. Over time, more jurisdictions and institutions will participate in the national approach to single ethics review.

Streamlined ethics review will support collaborative research projects, reduce administrative burden and accelerate the commencement of multicentre research. It will also promote Australia as an attractive place to conduct multicentre clinical trials. Ethics reviews conducted by NHMRC-certified institutions provide confidence to accepting institutions that accepting a single ethics review outcome will not come at the cost of participant wellbeing.

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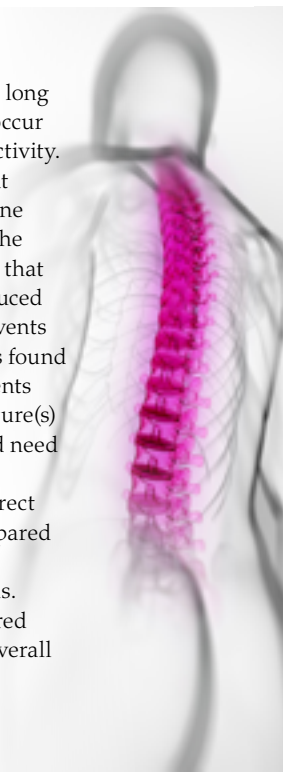
News

Bisphosphonates for multiple myeloma

In multiple myeloma, pathological fractures of the long bones or compression fractures in the spine may occur due to malignant lesions increasing osteoclastic activity. But treatment with bisphosphonates, which inhibit this activity, can reduce vertebral fractures and bone pain, according to an updated Cochrane review. The review of 20 trials involving 6692 patients showed that adding bisphosphonates to myeloma treatment reduced pathological vertebral fractures, skeletal-related events and pain, compared with placebo. The researchers found that between eight and 20 multiple myeloma patients would need to be treated to prevent vertebral fracture(s) in one patient. Between five and 13 patients would need to be treated to reduce pain in one patient.

The results of the meta-analysis showed no direct effect of bisphosphonates on overall survival compared with placebo or no treatment. However, there was significant heterogeneity among the included trials. A metaregression showed that zoledronate appeared superior to placebo and etidronate in improving overall survival.

Cochrane Database Syst Rev 2012; (5): CD003188



Improving medicine access in developing countries

All countries should allocate at least 0.01% of their gross domestic product to investment in pharmaceutical research and development (R&D), according to a working group of the World Health Assembly. An analysis by the Consultative Expert Working Group on Research and Development recommended that all countries contribute to R&D investment according to the size of their economy. The group also recommended that R&D be conducted within an open knowledge innovation framework, where knowledge is either in the public domain or free to use through licensing arrangements. The group said the current R&D system cannot deliver solutions for health issues that are particularly significant in developing countries because those markets can't afford the medicine prices required to recoup R&D costs. The group also proposed that their recommendations be combined into a legally binding, international convention.

PLoS Med 2012; 9: e1001219

From the MJA archives

MJA 1945; 10 March (edited extract)

The Blood Bank: the first 4 years' practical experience

The organisation of a "blood bank" was first undertaken in Australia in Melbourne in the latter half of 1938, and in January 1939, stored blood 10 days old was administered. Blood has been collected from voluntary donors of the Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service. Donors were instructed not to eat any fatty foods at the meal preceding the giving of blood, and suitable foods were suggested.

During the period January 1939 to January 1943, blood for the bank was collected from 2546 donors. The average number of donors in the first year was four per week; by the fourth year the figure was 28 donors per week.

The blood collected from 504 donors (19.8% of the total number bled) was discarded for various reasons. In five cases the blood had solidly clotted, owing to insufficient admixture with the anticoagulant solution. Sixteen bottles were discarded owing to the fatty appearance of the plasma on removal from the refrigerator. In some cases, the donors had apparently



partaken of a hearty meal, as a definite "cream" on the plasma up to 0.25 inch thick was observed. When the blood had been stored for 21 days it was discarded, and 318 bottles were wasted in this way.

Reports were received of the results of the administration of 1311 bottles of blood to 1032 patients. In this series, 40 reactions are reported to have occurred following the administration of 47 bottles of blood. This includes 30 febrile reactions, seven cases of jaundice, two other reactions classified as haemolytic and one case of urticaria.

By M Bick, Walter and Eliza Hall Institute

Schizophrenia's genetic basis

Researchers have identified a group of genes associated with schizophrenia, which can be used to generate a genetic risk prediction score. The analysis used an approach called "translational convergent functional genomics", which draws on data from several types of studies including genome-wide association studies, genetic linkage studies and animal models. The data revealed significant genetic overlap with other major psychiatric disorders such as anxiety and bipolar disorder. The researchers said their data were consistent with a model of disrupted neuronal connectivity in schizophrenia.

Mol Psychiatry 2012; 15 May (online)

Renal denervation lowers blood pressure

A small study led by Australian researchers has found that renal denervation lowers blood pressure in patients with moderate to severe chronic kidney disease. The blood pressure of the 15 patients in the study was lowered significantly at 1, 3, 6 and 12 months after the minimally invasive procedure using catheter-based radioablation. Additionally, the denervation did not worsen patients' kidney function.

J Am Soc Nephrol 2012; 17 May (online)

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