



Colombian twins Juan Manuel and John Anderson Giraldo walk during a march against infant obesity on 24 September 2011 in Medellin, Colombia. The twins are 18 months old and weigh 16 kg, while their ideal weight should be 11 kg, so hopefully the march will be just the start of quite a bit of walking for the twins and their family. Infant obesity is on the rise in Colombia, with one in six children between the ages of 5 and 17 considered overweight or obese. In Australia, one in five children and adolescents are overweight or obese.

From the NHMRC

Supporting better translation of research into policy and practice

To fully realise the benefits of health and medical research, we need to ensure that policymakers and those working in service delivery have prompt and easy access to the evidence base generated by high-quality research.

The successful National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Partnerships for Better Health initiative supports policymakers and researchers, providing policymakers with contemporary evidence on which to base decisions and allowing researchers to influence service delivery and the policy debate.

As part of this initiative, NHMRC Partnership Projects link up experienced researchers working in an Australian university or research institute with health care providers, non-government organisations, professional groups, peak bodies or government departments to investigate a specific health issue.

In all situations, the research is developed collaboratively between the researchers and the partner organisations to meet the partners' needs. The results of the research are immediately available to the partner organisations. The NHMRC meets half of the cost of the research, with the remainder provided through in-kind or financial support from the research partners.

For example, Professor Caroline Finch is working with the Australian Football League and New South Wales Sporting Injuries Committee to reduce sports injuries by researching the effectiveness of headgear and mouthguards, the prevention of knee injuries, and how to implement injury prevention in the sporting context.

Another example is the "Reducing salt in the Australian diet" project, which involves government, industry and scientific partners in a nationwide initiative to reduce Australians' salt consumption through policies and

industry action plans. Implementing these policies and plans specifically within a research context supports their development and assessment of their effectiveness.

The previous two rounds of Partnership Projects have seen more than 40 projects initiated across a diverse range of issues, with NHMRC funding of over \$30 million.

Applications for NHMRC Partnership Projects reopen in December 2011. The NHMRC is establishing a register of potential organisations with particular research needs, so that researchers have a single reference point regarding research partnership opportunities. Organisations that are interested in being placed on the register or with a general interest in the Partnership Projects should contact nhmrc.partnership.projects@nhmrc.gov.au. The NHMRC will post this information on its website and in its regular electronic newsletter *Research tracker*.

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News

A physician's life is intense, in all specialties

The intensity of work for doctors is fairly equal across different specialties, contrary to longstanding assumptions, according to a new study.

The work intensity of 108 neurologists, family physicians, general internists and surgeons in the south-east of the United States was measured using questionnaires such as the national Aeronautic and Space Administration-Task Load Index and the Dundee Stress Questionnaire.

"Although overall work intensity is similar among specialties, the specific dimensions of work intensity are more variable", the study authors wrote.

"Physical demand was particularly important for surgeons, while family physicians were more sensitive to temporal demand."

The questionnaire was used to determine the time, mental effort and judgement, technical skill, physician effort and psychological stress it took to care for a patient.

Work intensity was not affected by physician personality type, the researchers said.

They also said that it was time to move on from flawed assumptions that certain specialties work harder than others.

"The findings of this and other studies suggest that the instruments can be utilized in further investigation of clinical work intensity and that currently accepted assumptions of grossly differing work intensity among medical specialists may be flawed."

Med Care 2011; September (online)

Routine zoledronic acid use not supported in early breast cancer

The routine use of zoledronic acid in the adjuvant management of early-stage breast cancer is not supported, according to an open-label phase 3 randomised trial.

A total of 3360 patients were randomly assigned to receive standard adjuvant systemic therapy either with or without zoledronic acid. Zoledronic acid was given to participants every 3 to 4 weeks for six cycles and then every 3 to 6 months to complete 5 years of treatment.

At median follow-up of 59 months, there was no significant between-group difference in the primary end point of disease-free survival. In the zoledronic acid group there were 17 confirmed and nine suspected cases of osteonecrosis of the jaw, compared with no cases in the control group.

"These findings do not support the routine use of zoledronic acid in the adjuvant management of breast cancer", the authors of the study said.

In Australia, zoledronic acid is used in advanced breast cancer with bony metastases to reduce the risk of bone-related events, but it is not used in early breast cancer to prevent bone metastases.

N Engl J Med 2011; 25 September (online)

From the MJA archives

MJA 1931; 24 October

On laughter

Laughter, like good wine, is a gift from the gods. It is possible to pass through life and not to know the joys of either; and for one who achieves such a distinction nothing but sorrow mingled with pity can be felt. At the same time man may find it necessary to dispense with wine and, for one reason or another, may become incapable of laughter. These are hard times and men are wearing an unwonted mask; this mask, like a growing sickness, has made them gloomy and dour, and they wonder, sometimes without hope, when the returning glow of health will restore them to their former state. It is thus not unseemly to pause awhile and to consider whence laughter springs, how it resembles the fruit of the grape, and what it can do for those who capture it...



Wine varies in colour, in bouquet and in flavour. It may be sweet or dry, heavy or light, still or sparkling. It may be sour. Even effervescence, that quality which is supposed above all others to bring joy to the heart of man and maid, may be cheap, nasty and the result of an inferior process. So with laughter.

If you're happy and you know it, tweet

Twitter has been used to show that people are more likely to be in a positive mood early in the morning and again near midnight, suggesting mood may be shaped by work-related stress. Researchers looked at more than 500 million tweets from 2.4 million people in 84 countries and found people wake up in a good mood which worsens throughout the day. The tweets also showed that people were happier on non-working days of the week, the researchers from Cornell University said. They said Twitter's 140-character limit on message length allowed conversation-like exchanges, which were analysed, with the help of language monitoring software, for changes in hourly, daily and seasonal affect. "We identified individual-level diurnal and seasonal mood rhythms in cultures across the globe, using data from millions of public Twitter messages", the researchers said. "We found that individuals awaken in a good mood that deteriorates as the day progresses — which is consistent with the effects of sleep and circadian rhythm — and that seasonal variation in positive affect tracks changes in daylength."



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