MINERVA

A direct comparison of continuous antiviral treatment for HIV infected people in India with structured interrupted antiviral treatment reports that the primary end point of maintaining a CD4 count of more than 200×10^6 cells/l at six and 12 months was achieved by both groups. The secondary end points were effective viral suppression, adverse events, and cost. One patient in the continuous therapy group and two in the interrupted group sustained a plasma viral load of more than 400×10^3 copies/l. No serious adverse events or deaths were reported, and a 50% reduction in costs was seen with interrupted therapy (*AIDS Care* 2007;19:507-13).

Irritable bowel syndrome is sometimes treated in Saudi Arabia with hypnotherapy. A small study involving 26 patients showed that, after 12 sessions of hypnotherapy administered over 12 weeks, patients' quality of life had improved significantly, but more in the men than the women. In particular, dissatisfaction with bowel habits was reduced after treatment, but more in the women than the men (*Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal* 2007;13, www.emro.who.int/publications/emhj/1302/article10.htm).

Higher levels of spirituality and private religious practices are associated with slower progression of Alzheimer's disease (*Neurology* 2007;68:1509-14). There was no correlation between quality of life and speed of decline. The longitudinal study followed 70 patients with probable Alzheimer's disease, with the mini-mental state examination used to monitor cognitive decline. What's not known is whether the same variables have their impact if people have enjoyed their spirituality throughout life, or if it's a recent change.

The spiritual involvement and beliefs scale was recently translated into Greek and tested with 82 Greek patients with advanced cancer, along with the Greek hospital anxiety and depression scale. Validity and reliability testing supports the use of the Greek spirituality scale and finds it translates well across culture and language differences. It could be useful when looking after patients in palliative care who have "symptoms of spiritual distress" as well as physical and emotional ones (*American Journal of Hospice & Palliative Medicine* 2007;23:457-63).

Inoculating rats' surgical wounds with *Staphylococcus aureus* and subjecting the infected

A 7 year old girl was referred for suspected child abuse leading to multiple fractures of her skull. Clinically, the patient had short stature, with a bone age of 3 years, and features of congenital primary hypothyroidism. The skull anteroposterior x ray shows intrasutural or "wormian" bones along the coronal sutures, erroneously labelled as fracture. The anterior fontanelle is visualised (delayed closure). The skull is brachycephalic, and the paranasal sinuses and facial bones are poorly developed. Wormian bones are typical radiographic findings in congenital hypothyroidism, and they disappear at a bone age of 5 years.

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wounds to seven different types of treatment revealed that a high concentration of locally applied antibiotic inside the wound is effective in killing bacteria in wound cavities, especially where systemic antibiotics have poor penetration. The various local treatments—irrigating the wound with an antibiotic, packing it with antibiotic-loaded flakes of calcium sulphate, and local injection of aqueous antibiotic solution—were compared with systemic approaches (*Journal of Bone & Joint Surgery Am* 2007;89:929-33).

Just when complementary health approaches are taking a battering, here's a systematic review of a Chinese herbal medicine for schizophrenia no less (*British Journal of Psychiatry* 2007;190:379-

84). Seven trials were included, and most evaluated herbal medicine alongside conventional antipsychotic drugs. In most of them, combination therapy was favoured over antipsychotics alone for improving clinical outcome measures.

Another somewhat quirky approach involves weekly, twice monthly, and monthly psychotherapy as "maintenance" treatment for women with recurrent depression. The research question was whether more frequent sessions of psychotherapy have a greater prophylactic effect than a previously validated once monthly session. The answer was a surprising "no"—once a month was sufficient. However, for women who had needed antidepressants as well as psychotherapy before achieving remission, "maintenance" psychotherapy alone was significantly less beneficial (*American Journal of Psychiatry* 2007;164:761-7).

Transfusions of fresh frozen plasma and of platelets are risk factors for acute lung injury and respiratory distress in critically ill patients and produce more problems than transfusions of red blood cells (*Chest* 2007;131:1308-14). In this single centre study of 841 critically ill patients, the 298 (35%) who received any blood product transfusion were more likely to develop a serious lung injury (odds ratio 2.14 (95% CI 1.24 to 3.75)).

Transplant patients who develop abdominal graft versus host disease can be treated with oral beclomethasone dipropionate to prevent relapse after prednisolone treatment has been tapered off. By day 200 after transplantation, in a randomised placebo controlled trial of oral beclomethasone, five patients randomised to the drug had died compared with 16 deaths with placebo (a 67% reduction in the hazard of death). The survival benefit remained one year after randomisation (*Blood* 2007;109:4557-63).

Results from the "recent immigrant pregnancy and perinatal long term evaluation study" (RIPPLES) indicate that the risk of maternal placental syndromes reduces progressively with the recency of immigration. In other words, women who have recently immigrated to Western nations show that the "healthy immigrant effect" extends to common placental disorders. New immigrants should be discouraged from adopting adverse lifestyle choices. The effect wears off over time (*CMAJ* 2007;176:1409-26).