

# N OTHER JOURNALS

## Buzz off!

With summer fast approaching and the spectre of evening barbecues dogged by mosquitoes, it is interesting to note that a recent US study confirms that personal repellents containing N,N-diethyl-3-methylbenzamide (DEET) are still the best available in that country. Fifteen volunteers tested 16 products three times each (a total of 720 tests) using the "arm-in-cage" technique. DEET-based products provided complete protection for 88.4 to 301.5 minutes, depending on their concentration. Citronella-based products protected for 2.8 minutes (0.5%) to 18.9 minutes (10%, combined with other botanical oils) and a 2% soybean oil product (marketed for children) protected for 94.6 minutes. Wrist bands impregnated with either DEET or citronella were completely ineffective. For those of you who swear by a popular bath oil, this failed the test after 9.6 minutes. Interestingly, a product containing eucalyptus oil came onto the US market just as the study finished. Testing on six subjects ended in a skin reaction in one and a mean complete protection time of 120 minutes in the other five.

*N Engl J Med* 2002; 347: 13-18

## ... A thousand words

Recent articles in the *MJA* highlighting a lack of psychosocial outcome data for cosmetic surgery did not include children, but a report from a US plastic surgeon suggests that we can learn much about children's response to such surgery from their art. The surgeon collected 200 drawings from children, before

and after they underwent surgery for a variety of congenital, aesthetic and traumatic deformities. A child psychiatrist and an art therapist evaluated the drawings, finding recurring themes of low self-esteem, isolation, unhappiness and fear in the "before" drawings, with improvements in all these parameters in the "after" drawings. Twelve examples are reproduced in the printed article, which is well worth a look.

*Plast Reconstr Surg* 2002; 109: 1777-1786

## Making the news

At the *MJA* we often wonder why some of our articles capture the imagination of the popular press, while others are met with a deafening silence. A study of press releases by medical journals and medical reporting in two British newspapers suggests that bias operates at both levels. Of 1193 original research articles published in the *Lancet* and *BMJ* in 1999 and 2000, 517 received a press release and 81 were reported in either the *Times* or the *Sun* newspapers. No studies without press releases made it into the papers, but newspapers were more likely to follow-up press releases reporting "bad" than "good" news, and preferred observational studies to randomised controlled trials. The hot topics were women's health, reproduction and cancer.

*BMJ* 2002; 325: 81-84



## Don't worry, be happy!

Expectant mothers have yet another thing to worry about, as new research reveals that anxiety in pregnancy is associated with behavioural and emotional problems in their offspring. The Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children followed 7448 women in Avon, UK, from early pregnancy until their children were four years old. Maternal anxiety and depression were measured via validated self-report instruments at 18 and 32 weeks' gestation, and four times in the three years following birth. The children's behavioural adjustment at age four was estimated by a validated parental report measure. High antenatal maternal anxiety scores in late pregnancy were associated with behavioural and emotional problems in both boys and girls (ORs 1.56 and 1.51, respectively, after controlling for antenatal, obstetric and psychosocial factors, and postnatal depression and anxiety).

*Br J Psychiatry* 2002; 180: 502-508

## A burning issue

With the annual incidence of melanoma currently in excess of 45/100000 for men and 35/100000 for women, Australia remains the melanoma mecca of the world. Public health messages about sun exposure are starting to show benefit, however, with a recent slight fall in incidence in younger women. The same is not true for Scotland, a country better known for its bleak weather than its opportunities for sunbathing. The Scottish Melanoma Group collated data on the 8830 patients diagnosed with invasive melanoma in Scotland between 1979 and 1998. The incidence increased steadily during the study period (from 3.5 to 10.6/100000 in men, and 7.0 to 13.1/100000 in women). Five-year survival rates improved, however, due to a higher proportion of thinner detected tumours in later years, suggesting that the Scots are at least responding to secondary prevention messages.

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