

From the Library

"Roosevelt was briefly inspired by Emile Coué, the French proponent of the doctrine that 'every day in every way, I'm getting better and better.' Coué acknowledged to a friend of Roosevelt's who had inquired about it that there was little he could do for a polio case. When an English noblewoman of his acquaintance recommended a new elixir, Roosevelt wrote jokingly to Dr Draper about the merits of a concoction made from the 'dried eyes of the extinct three toed rhinoceros or the distilling of the remains of King Tut-Ankh-Amen. The serum might put new life into some of our mutual friends.' " Black, Conrad. *Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Champion of Freedom*. New York, Public Affairs, 2003:156.

Some ocular disorders have been reported to be important predictors of a decreased lifespan. In the AREDS report No 13 the authors documented that there was decreased survival of patients with age related macular degeneration and cataract. There was improved survival in individuals randomly assigned to receive zinc in this study. The authors suggest that zinc supplementation to improve visual disability as well as to prevent fatal diseases requires further study. (*Archives of Ophthalmology* 2004;**122**:716-26)

A growing body of evidence suggests that humans are not well adjusted to a diet of meat. Meat eating comes with a cost: increased risk of heart disease, stroke, cancer, and diabetes. Recent studies suggest that at least eight meat adaptive genes may be important in helping humans cope with cholesterol, infections, and other meat derived ailments. One such gene is a variant of apolipoprotein E which mediates the uptake of cholesterol and fat cells and has a protective role in cardiovascular and Alzheimer's disease. Mutations in some of these meat adaptive genes may account for much of the disability related to diets high in meat. (*Scientific American* 2004;**290**:26)

Preschool children who have difficulty sleeping appear to be more likely to drink alcohol and abuse drugs later in life. In a study at the University of Michigan researchers found that boys who had habitual problems falling asleep or experienced fatigue during the day were twice as likely as healthy sleepers to drink, smoke tobacco, and use illicit drugs in their teens.

The investigators suggest that a lack of sleep may cause a chemical imbalance. Alternatively, sleep disorders and drug addictions may share a common brain pathway. (*Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* 2004;**28**:972-4)

The promise of gene therapy continues to be largely unfulfilled. Regrettably, one of the most promising gene therapy trials has been recently halted because of mild side effects. In a clinical safety test of treatment of haemophilia B with adeno associated virus vector carrying a gene for vector IX there was significant improvement in blood clotting proteins. However, a patient given a higher dose of a vector developed liver enzyme elevation and reduced factor IX levels. Liver enzymes rose in another patient and it was for this reason that the study was temporarily halted. In contrast with previous failures, however, this gene therapy trial appears likely to be resumed. (*Science* 2004;**304**:1423)

Many hospitals and medical centres now have departments specifically devoted to women's health. Few devote similar resources to men's health. A new journal concentrating on the problems of men's health has just been initiated—*The Journal of Men's Health and Gender*. The journal is edited by Viennese physician Siegfried Meryn. It points out that women have a tendency to get regular checkups but men disappear from the healthcare system until they get to be much older. The journal hopes to address these questions as well as funding of research projects. It also points out that prostate cancer kills almost as many men each year as breast cancer does but much more public attention and money are devoted to breast cancer. (Go to: www.jmhg.org)

The COMS Study has recently reported the 10 year follow up of fellow eyes of patients enrolled in their collaborative ocular melanoma randomised trials. Almost all surviving patients retained good visual acuity in fellow eyes after 10 years of follow up. There was no evidence that fellow eyes in patients whose affected eyes were treated with pre-enucleation radiation or with ¹²⁵T brachtherapy were at a greater risk of loss of visual acuity or new ophthalmic diagnoses than eyes of patients treated with enucleation alone. (*Ophthalmology* 2004;**111**:966-76)

The association between smoking and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease is well established. However, only 15-20% of chronic smokers develop chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. In a recent study investigators demonstrated that bronchial cells from smokers who developed obstructive disease appeared to have a greater inflammatory response to stimulation with an irritant than smokers without air flow limitation. This study suggests that some smokers respond much less to irritants in cigarettes and may therefore be protected from developing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. (*Chest* 2004;**125**:1706-13)

Photodynamic therapy (PDT) has been demonstrated to reduce the risk of visual loss in some patients with subfoveal choroidal neovascularisation due to age related macular degeneration. However, the protective effects of this therapy have proved to be somewhat disappointing. Questions have been raised as to whether the PDT may in itself cause retinal damage. In a report from Hong Kong investigators report that there is a transient impairment in retinal function shortly after PDT which is sustained for 2 weeks as demonstrated by a reduction in multifocal ERG response amplitudes and delay in peak latency. At 1 month, however, there is a recovery of this retinal function as measured by multifocal ERG. Long term studies are required to further define this retinal impairment associated with PDT. (*American Journal of Ophthalmology* 2004;**137**:826-33)

Physicians are well aware of the placebo response. Its neurological correlates have until recently not been defined. However, in a study of patients with Parkinson's disease who were injected with drugs that temporarily relieved symptoms of muscle stiffness and tremors the placebo effect was demonstrated quite clearly. In this study the patients were subsequently switched to a harmless salt solution without being told of a change in treatment. Surgically implanted medical wires in the brain recorded that electrical activity from single brain cells in the subthalamic nucleus became less active after the sham medication even though patients continued to report some efficacy of the treatment. (Go to: [doi.10.1038/nn1250](https://doi.org/10.1038/nn1250). *Nature Neuroscience*)



From the Library

Br J Ophthalmol 2004 88: 1104
doi: 10.1136/bjo.2004.bjaug04ftl

Updated information and services can be found at:
<http://bjo.bmj.com/content/88/8/1104.full.html>

These include:

References

This article cites 4 articles, 2 of which can be accessed free at:
<http://bjo.bmj.com/content/88/8/1104.full.html#ref-list-1>

**Email alerting
service**

Receive free email alerts when new articles cite this article. Sign up in the box at the top right corner of the online article.

Notes

To request permissions go to:
<http://group.bmj.com/group/rights-licensing/permissions>

To order reprints go to:
<http://journals.bmj.com/cgi/reprintform>

To subscribe to BMJ go to:
<http://group.bmj.com/subscribe/>