Vitreous haemorrhage occurring in association with subarachnoid haemorrhage is known as Terson’s syndrome. Recently, investigators from Belfast reviewed articles related to subarachnoid haemorrhage published from 1996 until 2003; 154 papers were reviewed. Of 181 patients with subarachnoid haemorrhage assessed prospectively 13% had vitreous haemorrhage. Of 1086 who were reviewed retrospectively, 3% had documented vitreous haemorrhage. In both series, patients with vitreous haemorrhage and subarachnoid haemorrhage had a much poorer prognostic outcome than patients with subarachnoid haemorrhage alone. The fact that prospective studies showed a higher frequency of Terson’s syndrome than retrospective studies suggests that vitreous haemorrhage is not well documented in this clinical setting. Because of its poor prognostic outcome these cases should be carefully documented. (Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry 2004;75:491–3)

Recent reports have emphasised that even relatively mild physical activity for as short as 15 minutes may help to prevent obesity. This somewhat polyannna view about exercise has recently been challenged. In simulating the efficacy of a population-wide campaign 50% of eligible athletes would have to perform athletic walking for almost 30 minutes every day in order to meet the goal of expending an extra 420 kJ a day across the population. The authors of this study suggest this is not a realistic expectation for any population. There may be no free lunch in the obesity battle. (American Journal of Public Health 2004;94:437–40)

In Germany and France, ginkgo biloba extract is one of the most commonly prescribed drugs especially used for the treatment of peripheral vascular diseases such as intermittent claudication and cerebral insufficiency. It has been reported to prevent ischaemic induced oxidation, improve cerebral blood flow, and antagonise the action of platelet activating factor. Ginkgo biloba extract is a standardised mixture of active substances including 24% flavonoid glycosides and 6% terpenoids obtained from green leaves of the ginkgo biloba tree. It is capable of scavenging free radicals such as nitric oxide and modulating intracellular signal transduction events. Investigators from Japan have reported that in rats with unilateral chronic moderately elevated intraocular pressure ginkgo biloba extract provided a neuroprotective effect on retinal ganglion cells. This was true even without reducing the intraocular pressure. (Current Eye Research 2004;28:153–7)

A recent study demonstrating that bone marrow stem cells injected into damaged hearts of living mice differentiated into cardiomyocytes and improved heart function was met with enormous enthusiasm among cardiovascular researchers. Now data from two independent laboratories raised questions about whether the early mouse study is correct. These studies used highly sensitive labelling methods to monitor the fate of bone marrow cells and found no evidence that these donor cells differentiated into cardiomyocytes. The studies did not address the therapeutic potential of the procedure but the potential for bone marrow stem cells to differentiate into mature cardiomyocytes has yet to be conclusively demonstrated. (Nature 2004;428:1038)