

CORPORATE HEALTHCARE BULLETIN 19/1

The declining role of hospitals

The new NHS long-term plan says major changes in health service 'architecture' will divert investment into primary care and prevention. Patients themselves and local doctors will use technological innovations including robots to detect brain changes of dementia or ultrasound scanning smartphones. Blood and breath tests will detect DNA changes associated with cancer or strokes, alongside novel software to identify depression from changes in social media use.

After years of encouraging ever-greater specialisation among doctors, the plan will remodel the NHS workforce to include more generalists who will spend much of their time consulting on-line. More personalised care and fewer hospital attendances should slash the spiraling £8bn annual cost of outpatient care, though as demand continues to rise, it is hard to see how real savings might be achieved.

<https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/nhs-long-term-plan.pdf>

https://www.bmj.com/content/364/bmj.l85?utm_source=etoc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=tbmj&utm_content=weekly&utm_term=20190111

Identifying heart attack sufferers ten years early

Troponin, a protein released into the blood when the heart muscle is damaged, can be detected and used to predict heart attack risk up to ten years before the event, researchers have found. NICE, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence which assesses new therapies is currently evaluating a troponin test which could be added to mid-life 'MOT' check offered by the NHS to people aged over 40. According to The Times, experts believe the test result could give people a wake up call to improve diet and lifestyle before disaster strikes.

<https://academic.oup.com/circulation/article/114/6/e36/4974460>

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/cheap-blood-test-could-predict-a-heart-attack-ten-years-in-advance-5mxp8pvzi>

Treating obesity as a disease

The Royal College of Physicians says obesity is caused by social factors, health inequalities and genetics. More than 60% of adults and 35% of children are unhealthily fat costing the NHS untold billions, and concerted government action is needed to tackle it. The condition is not a consequence of greed but should be classed as a disease, the College says.

Oh no it shouldn't, says health secretary Matt Hancock, who says calling obesity a disease is telling people it's not their fault.

But why should sugar addicts be stigmatised when drinkers, smokers and drug addicts are offered sympathy and treatment, asks Daily Mail columnist Sarah Vine who struggles with her own weight. It is a dispute which will run and run, while the great British public looks on - with a Coke in one hand and a Mars bar in the other...

<https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/news/rcp-calls-obesity-be-recognised-disease>

https://www.bmj.com/content/364/bmj.l45?utm_source=etoc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=tbmj&utm_content=weekly&utm_term=20190111

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/tackling-obesity-is-a-shared-responsibility-for-society>

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-6596277/SARAH-VINE-Wholl-care-poor-frazzled-women-sandwich-generation.html>

Risk of vaccinating older travellers against tropical disease



Following the death of leading cancer scientist Martin Gore, 67, who suffered total organ failure shortly after receiving yellow fever vaccine, the British Society for Immunology issued a statement warning such reactions could be up to four times more common in people aged over 60 because of vulnerability of ageing immune systems. World Health Organisation figures show there are up to 170,000 yellow fever cases and up to 60,000 deaths a year worldwide. Older travellers are being

advised to weigh up the risks of exposure to the disease against the potential risk of the vaccine.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-46836877>

<https://www.immunology.org/news/bsi-response-death-martin-gore-following-yellow-fever-vaccine>

<https://academic.oup.com/jtm/article/23/5/taw045/2579333>

Effective treatment for migraine sufferers



Migraines could be treated with electro magnetic current as NICE rejects the first proposed drug to be marketed in 20 years. Relief may at last be available for at least some of the one in seven people who suffer regular debilitating migraine headaches. Electrical brain activity in a migraine causes excruciating agony, flashing lights or temporary blind spots, blurred vision and vomiting. The condition costs the economy

an estimated £2.25 billion a year. Transcranial magnetic stimulation involves holding a sort of padded block against the back of the head which emits a painless burst of electricity to interrupt the electrical storm of a migraine. The device is being trialled at Guys and St Thomas' hospital in London. It has been tested by 90 migraine sufferers and seemed to work on more than half of them.

Meanwhile NICE has decided not to approve the new migraine drug Aimovig for NHS use. It is the first monoclonal antibody for migraine and works by blocking a brain chemical receptor believed to play a crucial role in causing the headaches. Studies have suggested it halves the number of days of migraine symptoms, but at £5,000 a year NICE has decided the new treatment which is made by Novartis, is just too expensive.

<https://www.migrainetrust.org/living-with-migraine/treatments/transcranial-magnetic-stimulation/>

<https://www.nice.org.uk/news/article/new-migraine-drug-not-cost-effective-nice-says-in-draft-guidance>

New danger from treatment resistant sexual disease



Two women have recently been diagnosed with multi-drug resistant 'super gonorrhea', raising fears that this increasingly common sexually transmitted disease may become untreatable. One was infected in a 'European party destination' while the other contracted it in the UK. Gonorrhea which can cause infertility, infected more than 45,000 people in Britain in 2017, compared to 15,000 a decade ago. According to Public Health England, rates of the infection among over 45 year-olds have almost doubled in the past five

years alone, with much of the increase blamed on a rising divorce rate, people meeting new partners in later life and not using condoms because pregnancy is not an issue.

http://www.pharmatimes.com/news/rise_of_antibiotic-resistant_super-gonorrhoea_1274622

Should corporate healthcare be doing more to treat infertility?



WPA experts have begun investigating workplace issues around gender and fertility treatment. After Apple and Facebook became the first employers to offer 'social' egg freezing as part of their healthcare package for women, other American tech companies have followed suit. Now UK fertility clinics are getting more inquiries from British companies wanting to do the same. With an estimated 200,000 to 500,000

people suffering gender dysphoria other employers are also wondering if they should offer gender reassignment as well.

Bank of America Merrill Lynch, the American investment bank, recently came under fire from its London workforce for offering to cover gender reassignment but not IVF, although it offers IVF to American workers.

WPA is examining the pitfalls of such an inconsistent approach. We are also investigating the lack of interest in male infertility and the significant variation in overall success rates between clinics.

There are further insurance issues around the increasing demand for fertility treatment from women beyond natural reproductive age; controversies around unproven and expensive 'add-on' treatments, and whether infertility as a consequence of cancer should be routinely covered by healthcare plans for both men and women.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/city-branch-of-merrill-lynch-offers-its-staff-gender-change-but-noivf-0k623pd2w>

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-6587581/British-IVF-clinics-helping-women-babies-60-no-legal-age-limit.html>

European Society for Human Reproduction and Embryology: Comparative Analysis of Medically Assisted Reproduction in the EU: Regulation and Technologies

<https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:17HVe46DxHUJ:https://www.eshre.eu/~media/sitecore-files/Guidelines/Guidelines/MAR-report.pdf%3Ffla%3Den+&cd=2&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=fr&client=safari>