

Surfing the web

Look out, doctors! Your patients may know more than you do. For here is a mere fraction of the 60 pages of medical news that I was able to print out on 21 May in less than 10 minutes by surfing the web. It may not all be peer reviewed or evidence based, but here it is anyway.

In Italy they have a "red cell loader" that attaches drug molecules to erythrocytes and returns them to the patient's body, so that therapeutic levels can be maintained for up to seven days. In Sweden there were reports of large doses of carcinogenic acrylamide being found in fried foods, but later frightened readers were reassured that this was neither dangerous nor peer reviewed, that there was much more acrylamide in cigarettes, and that one should go easy on fried foods anyway.

From England comes news that the tongue twister diethylenetriamine pentaacetic acid deprives skin bacteria of iron and keeps armpits smelling fresher than other deodorants. The Prince of Wales wants the government to pay for complementary medicine. In the United States a woman who enjoys acupuncture to calm her nerves had sudden severe pain. "Oh, that hurt you because you have problems there," explained the acupuncturist, but later an ultrasound showed that there was blood in the peritoneal cavity.

A long article advises doctors on how to deal with the pharmaceutical industry without selling their souls. Another reminds us that aspirin is the oldest wonder drug, that it relieved Enrico Caruso's headaches, and allowed Franz Kafka to write about cockroaches, and how women now can take "Aspirin Plus Calcium." Yet another article describes how antidepressants normalise serotonin and help control bulimia nervosa.

The *Guardian* worried about who will pay for all the new expensive cancer cures; and indeed there were stories that day about imatinib for leukaemia, cetuximab for colon cancer, bryostatins made by marine organisms, bevacizumab that inhibits angiogenesis, pemetrexed for mesotheliomas, Iressa for lung cancers, and tiny radioactive seeds that destroy cancers locally.

In Michigan cancer families were offered free accommodation at a cancer centre. But in Singapore children who read more than two books per week are three times more likely to suffer from severe myopia, and therefore I stop now before we all become affected