

## News Tidbits

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### Blood Test for Major Depressive Disorder JPMS NEWS

Psychiatric disorders are always difficult to diagnose. With symptoms almost always being non-definable and clinician observations being subjective in nature, the guidelines for diagnosis by learned societies and agencies have not been helpful. However, a preliminary study published in the *Translational Psychiatry* in April this year has identified certain biological markers in blood which are found in teenagers with early-onset major depressive disorder (MDD). Thus, the study raises hopes for the development of a simple blood test for the diagnosis of MDD and potentially making an objective tool available to the physician.

The test would reduce diagnostic heterogeneity and has the potential to advance individualized treatment strategies, especially from the very early stages of the disease. However, studies to examine the utility of this test in actual clinical practice have not yet been performed.

### FDA Approves First Cord Blood Product JPMS NEWS

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved HEMACORD, making it the first licensed cord blood product.

HEMACORD contains hematopoietic progenitor cells (HPCs) from human cord blood. Cord blood is one of three sources of HPCs used in bone marrow transplant; the other two are the bone marrow and peripheral blood. The drug is indicated for patients who are undergoing hematopoietic stem cell transplantation due to the disorders of the hematopoietic (blood forming) system. This approval was based on the review of safety and effectiveness data.

'The use of cord blood hematopoietic progenitor cell therapy offers potentially life-saving treatment options for patients,' claims director of Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research at FDA.

### Similar Efficacy of IM and IV Drugs in Prehospital Status Epilepticus JPMS NEWS

Getting an intravenous (IV) access by paramedics in patients with status epilepticus has

always been a major hindrance to the administration of antiepileptic drugs. This difficulty often results in no drug administration during the entire prehospital period due to the lack of IV access. Paramedics are however more comfortable using the intramuscular (IM) route owing to it being faster, easier and more reliable. A study published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* finds that for subjects in status epilepticus, intramuscular midazolam is as safe and effective as intravenous lorazepam for prehospital seizure cessation. The adverse event rates were also similar in the two groups.

### Dementia: A Public Health Concern JPMS NEWS

Data published in the latest World Health Organization (WHO) report reveals that nearly 35.6 million people worldwide live with dementia. This number is likely to rise to more than 70% by the year 2050.

According to this report, treating and caring for people with dementia currently costs the world more than US\$ 604 billion per year. The report further states that most health care workers are not adequately trained to recognize dementia. The report also notes that individuals who care for a person with dementia are themselves prone to mental disorders, such as depression and anxiety, and often have financial constraints. The new report also calls for early diagnosis, raising public awareness, reducing stigma, and providing better care and more support to caregivers. Recommendations include involvement of the existing caregivers in designing programs to provide better support for people with dementia.

### Facebook Triggers Asthma JPMS NEWS

D'Amato et al in a case study published in *The Lancet* has reported a case where an 18-year-old known asthmatic on inhaled corticosteroids had developed acute exacerbations of asthma on accessing the picture of his ex-girlfriend on her Facebook profile. Apart from the temporal relation, the researchers have also validated their claims with peak expiratory flow rates which had a variability of 20%. The patient was cured after psychiatric intervention to prevent him from accessing Facebook.

**Dr Margaret Chan Gets Second Term in WHO**

## JPMS NEWS

Dr Margaret Chan was re-appointed for the second time as the Director General of the WHO on 23rd May 2012 at the World Health Assembly in Geneva. In her acceptance speech, she said that the "biggest challenge over the coming five years is to steer the work of WHO in ways that maintain the unprecedented momentum for better health that marked the start of this century." She also expressed concern that with the global economy going through difficult financial times there might be lack of funds, thereby undoing all that has been achieved in global health. She has identified the following areas of special priority: health systems and capacity building, chronic noncommunicable diseases, mental health and disabilities, health security, health development for poverty reduction, access to medical products, and improving WHO performance through reform.

**Cancer Related Mortality in India**

## JPMS NEWS

A national survey, the first such from India published in *The Lancet* (March 2012) found that 7137 of 122 429 study deaths were due to cancer, corresponding to 556 400 national cancer deaths in India in 2010.

The three most common fatal cancers were oral (22.9%), stomach (12.6%), and lung (11.4%) in men, whereas cervical (17.1%), stomach (14.1%), and breast (10.2%) cancers were the most common fatal cancers in women. Tobacco-related cancers represented 42.0% of male and 18.3% of female cancer deaths and there were twice as many deaths from oral cancers as lung cancers.

The survey funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation concludes that prevention of tobacco-related and cervical cancers and earlier detection of treatable cancers would reduce cancer deaths in India, particularly in the rural areas that are underserved by cancer services.