

A better story

Abortion on grounds of disability? Praise for one TV personality who having lived through the real-life anguish of having a disabled child, has publicly rejected abortion as an option in that situation. Katie Price became a mum at 23. She revealed on the ITV 'Loose Women' programme she 'probably would have aborted' her son Harvey had she known he would be born blind. Thirteen years on, however, she says she would have none of it. Bringing him up changed her opinion. 'I love Harvey so much. I would never change anything about him.' *Metro*, 2 February 2016 bit.ly/1ShD3Vv

Commons rejects unlimited Sunday shopping

Good news. The government's attempt to allow big stores to open on Sundays beyond the current six hours has failed. Here is an example of wrong-headed policy defeated by good parliamentary process. In opposition were the churches and the Association of Convenience stores (ACS). The government's case relied on shoddy evidence. Research cited in the case 'for' is simply reheated decade-old data. Extending hours during the Olympics did not increase overall till receipts. God instituted Sabbath rest for the best of reasons. *Telegraph* 28 February 2016 bit.ly/1UtDdJK

An apple a day

So now we know. Normally adults gain one or two kilos every four years in middle age, but you don't need fad diets to beat middle age spread. Just eat a handful of grapes a few times a week. Add berries, apples or cherries and plenty of vegetables. Keep the habit over two decades and in every probability you won't add to your waist – maybe even you'll get slimmer. These are the findings of three massive 24-year US studies involving 124,000 people. An elaborate research project showing what common sense probably knew all along. *Independent*, 29 January 2016 ind.pn/1nV62T0

Risks to IVF children

Pascal Gagneux, a San Diego-based population expert has ruffled feathers claiming children born through IVF face a potential health timebomb: a higher risk of diabetes, high blood pressure and premature death. IVF is an 'evolutionary experiment' and could pose health risks on par with junk food. He's met a chorus of opposition. For example fertility expert Professor Allan Pacey (Sheffield) concedes there is much to learn about how the female reproductive tract selects sperm for fertilisation, but claims 'a wealth of evidence' suggests IVF babies do as well as those conceived naturally. *Mail Online*, 16 February 2016 dailym.ai/1OdzBUG

When food prices bite

Spikes in food prices hit the poor hardest. But why do they happen? One factor is financial instruments linked to food staples such as sugar, wheat and corn. They can cause sharp fluctuations in prices of these items. Now a coalition of NGOs is calling on the EU to demand greater transparency in the way food futures are traded and curbs on price speculation. 'High and volatile food prices have had a devastating impact in poor and food dependent countries, causing increased hunger, poverty and instability,' says Global Justice Now. *Guardian*, 1 March 2016 bit.ly/1TCzB8P

Speaking of food, again

There is no such thing as 'healthy food', says Harry Balzer, retail analyst with the NPD Group (USA) and we need to steer people away from misuse of terminology. People are healthy, good food is nutritious, he insists. We take for granted that a kale salad is healthy and that a Big Mac with fries is not. To describe a kale salad as healthy, however, obscures what is most important: that it's packed with nutrients your body needs. But if all you ate was kale, you would become sick, he says. *Independent*, 19 February 2016 ind.pn/1NIqlc0

Police and mental health services overstretched

Some 40 percent of police time is taken up dealing with incidents relating to mental health problems. According to December's report by the Revolving Doors Agency it cuts across public services and adding extra pressures the police. Almost weekly there are reports of mental health services buckling under high demand and sharp budget cuts. There is increased pressure on A&Es as well, all this alongside police facing their own funding cuts. *Guardian*, 3 February 2016 bit.ly/1JZSqQg

New virus, new threat?

Well, not particularly new. According to the *New Scientist*, it first surfaced in Uganda in 1947 with sporadic outbreaks in Africa, Southeast Asia and Pacific island communities since. It reached Brazil in May 2015 and from there has spread to nine more countries. Containing it is an important priority for health services. 'Clinicians need to be aware that this virus is rampant in South America' and 'it's probably being under-diagnosed,' says Abraham Goorhuis of the Center for Tropical and Travel Medicine at the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, who diagnosed three people returning from Suriname in December. *New Scientist*, 30 December 2015 bit.ly/1XXcVe3

Sugar in the dock

William Wilberforce persuaded people to boycott sugar because of its association with the slave trade. Now there are calls to tax fizzy drinks and sugar-heavy snacks to improve the nation's health. Public Health England says we eat too much sugar and it makes us fat and ill. PHE offers suggestions to help achieve a new lower recommended daily intake of sugar (5% of total energy, down from 10%). It would save lives from weight-related diseases, cut tooth decay, and save the NHS £576 million a year. *NHS Choices*, 23 October 2015 bit.ly/1i8LWkF

Ban on junk food online ads

A public consultation is planned over proposals to ban advertisements for junk food on content streamed online aimed at children, says the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP). Foods considered unhealthy cannot be advertised on children's television. It is proposed to extend this ban to online outlets like You Tube or ITV Hub. Growing numbers of companies are utilising online video to reach young audiences. A ban would achieve consistency. It makes little sense to ban certain ads on television where the same programmes carrying them streamed online are not. *BBC Health* 13 March 2016 bbc.in/1UsR1UA