

Whoever pays the piper...

Before *Triple Helix* launched, CMF took an important decision. While we knew there would be plenty of businesses willing to pay high rates to reach 4,000+ doctors, accepting commercial advertising or sponsorship could compromise the integrity of the Fellowship. This came to mind recently on reading a report about the fizzy drinks industry. Surprise surprise, if funded by a corporation in the fizzy drinks industry, research nearly always finds no link between soda drinking and obesity, whereas research with no affiliation to the industry yields a mixed picture. *Reuters/Scientific American* 15 November 2016 bit.ly/2fuTan0

To vape or not

Is vaping a slippery slope to smoking? A study of American teens suggests that those who regularly vape are more likely to move on to tobacco than their non-vaping peers. The study is from the University of Southern California Keck School of Medicine and the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine. It questioned 3,000 15-year-olds and found an association between frequent use of e-cigarettes at the start of the study and smoking tobacco at follow-up. E-cigarettes may be safer than tobacco but they do pose health risks. *Mail* 8 November 2016 daily.ai/2fYYuf5

Yet another healthcare gap

Personal healthtech digital devices can monitor fitness, spot potential heart attacks, check glucose levels and blood pressure. Their availability grows exponentially and in future they will help people learn even more about their personal health and health in general. All these possibilities are great. 'But most of the available technologies are not designed with and for the users who could benefit most - the most vulnerable of society,' say Public Health researchers Quianta Moore and Rebecca Richards-Kortum from Rice University. *The Conversation* 18 October 2016 bit.ly/2fllFxy

Scouting and guiding... good for mental health

A research team from Edinburgh suggests that belonging to Scouts or Guides is good for mental health in later middle age. The team viewed data in a long-running study of just under 10,000 people across the UK, born in 1958. They found that 28% of the participants were involved in Scouts and Guides and these were 15% less likely to suffer from anxiety or mood disorders at the age of 50 than their non-participating peers. One implication is that learning self-reliance early on brings mental health benefits. *New Scientist* and *Press Association* 10 November 2016 bit.ly/2fHcsAr

Child cancer and quality of life

Cancer Research reports children diagnosed with cancer in the 1990s survive longer than those diagnosed in the 1970s. There is, however, a caveat. 'There hasn't been a reduction in long-term side effects or improvements in quality of life', says Cambridge-based Dr Saif Ahmad. The US study accessed data from the Childhood Cancer Survivor Study, with information on health status on 14,000 adult childhood cancer survivors treated between 1970 and 1999. The researchers anticipated that patients treated in the 70s would report worse overall long-term health than those treated in the 90s. *Cancer Research* 8 November 2016 bit.ly/2fZ157v

Vaccinating mosquitoes

In the 1950s Australia introduced Myxomatosis to see off a rabbit plague that threatened to decimate sheep and cattle pastures in the continent's inland areas. Now scientists in Brazil and Colombia have a similar idea. They want to release modified mosquitoes to see off carriers of mosquito-borne diseases such as Zika, dengue fever and chikungunya. Their mosquito army will be infected by a bug called Wolbachia, which is believed to reduce the ability of infected mosquitoes spreading these viruses to people. Donors include the Gates Foundation. *BBC News* 26 October 2016 bbc.in/2eLsuef

Dementia and worship

Hats off to the Church of England's Liturgical Commission: it's decided to focus on the needs of dementia sufferers by return to traditional language prayers, readings and hymns and utilising touch and handing around symbols. Bishop Robert Atwell, commission chairman, says: 'Journeying alongside those living with dementia is a costly business, but hugely important in our society where dementia is on the increase. Many find that the familiar words of worship and the singing of hymns reach into confusion and unlock the gates of memory.' *Daily Telegraph* 8 October 2016 bit.ly/2eJTv4H

Prisoners and mental health

Few will quibble with the thought that many UK prisons are in crisis. One indicator is a sharp rise in inmates with mental health problems. The *Guardian* reports the number of male prisoners transferred to hospital under the 1983 Mental Health Act grew by 20% between 2011 and 2014. A worry expressed by campaigners is that more people with mental health problems need to be sent to hospital instead of prison. But there has been a 25% fall in courts issuing hospital orders since 2011. Statistics for women are similar. *Guardian* 14 September 2016 bit.ly/2cqy72

Green space yields health benefits

A new study from the University of Exeter claims outdoor exercise delivers an estimated £2.2bn of health benefits to UK adults. Scientists calculated that more than eight million people each week took at least 30 minutes of 'green exercise'. Use of parks can help reverse the trend of rising obesity levels it observes. 'What we look at here is something that can be converted relatively simply into monetary values,' explained lead author Mathew White from the European Centre for Environment and Human Health at the University of Exeter. *BBC News* 20 September 2016 bbc.in/2dfPXGe

Mental health patients neglected

Government figures released in August indicate serious neglect of the needs of mental health patients in England. They are denied timely treatment promised by the government, figures reveal. The official target is intensive treatment within two weeks. But figures obtained by a Freedom of Information request suggest one in four of clinical commissioning groups are ignoring the target. For its part, NHS England says it is investing more to help meet demand. The waiting-time target is that patients aged 14 to 65 experiencing their first episode of psychosis should be treated within two weeks of referral. *BBC News* 10 August 2016 bbc.in/2aKFCMQ