

Altruism makes you less susceptible to pain

According to *The Times*, we should forget painkillers and do something kind instead, after a study at Peking University showed that cancer patients experienced less chronic pain when they helped to care for others on the same ward. Experiments also showed that healthy subjects who had recently acted selflessly experienced less physical discomfort from needle jabs and electric shocks! Doing unto others as you would have them do unto you would seem to have more comprehensive benefits. Who knew?
The Times 2 January 2020 [bit.ly/2w5T9P8](https://www.bit.ly/2w5T9P8)

Why marriage makes you stronger; quite literally

Growing old together in a happy marriage makes couples stronger. Quite literally! A study from last year has shown that men and women over 60 were found to be more physically capable than their unmarried, widowed or cohabiting peers, according to University College London. Everything from the strength of grip to how fast one walks improves among married couples compared to their unmarried peers. However, once factors relating to wealth were taken into account, the benefits of marriage diminished, suggesting that the greater physical wealth of married couples was the main reason for their health gains. Nevertheless, the words of the Philosopher spring to mind, '*Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labour... A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*' (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12) *The Telegraph* 23 January 2019 [bit.ly/2v6jJYD](https://www.bit.ly/2v6jJYD)

Italian 'Doctor Death' jailed

Leonardo Cazzaniga, who dubbed himself the 'Angel of Death' has been given a life sentence for murdering ten patients. Administering lethal cocktails of anaesthetics and morphine at ten times the recommended dose, he killed ten elderly patients at a hospital in Varese, northern Italy over several years. He named this the '*the Cazzaniga protocol*', arguing he was simply seeking to alleviate the pain of patients who were already dying '*to make their death dignified*'. Prosecutors said the doctor suffered from a 'delirium of omnipotence'. The concerns raised by nurses were ignored by a medical panel, the doctors on which were also prosecuted for the coverup. *The Times* 29 January 2020 [bit.ly/390B9nX](https://www.bit.ly/390B9nX)

Italian doctors hopeful for brain-damaged girl

In last autumn's Eutyclus, we reported on the case of Tafida Raqeeb, a brain-damaged girl who was taken to Italy for treatment after her parents won a High Court battle to prevent her life support being switched off. Her NHS medical team said further treatment was not in her interests, but her family disagreed. The BBC reported in January that she is now out of intensive care and breathing for up to an hour without assistance. The long-term aim of her medical team in Genoa is that she will be weaned off the ventilator in the coming months in order to be cared for at home. What degree of recovery she will achieve in the long-term is uncertain. *BBC News Online* 10 January 2020 [bbc.in/2vvoATd](https://www.bbc.in/2vvoATd)

South Korean sect at the heart of COVID-19 outbreak

The controversial and unpopular South Korean sect, Shincheonji has been at the centre of the COVID-19 outbreak cluster in the country, bringing further fear and hatred towards the group. About 80 per cent of the cases in the South Korean outbreak have been connected with the sect, who believe their founder, Lee Man-hee, is the second coming of Christ and has unique gifts in interpreting the true meaning of the Bible. Their practice of not using face coverings of any kind during intense and regular prayer meetings is thought to be one of the reasons why the virus spread so quickly through the group. Lee publicly apologised for the outbreak, getting on his knees at a press conference. *The Guardian* 28 November 2020 [bit.ly/2TsLoLi](https://www.bit.ly/2TsLoLi)

Racist patients to be denied access to care

Racism in the NHS is no laughing matter, and staff from black and minority ethnic backgrounds regularly report abuse from patients. So it is that the government have announced that from April 2020, any patient or hospital visitor found to be inflicting discriminatory or harassing behaviour on staff could be barred from receiving care, unless the case is an emergency. Of further concern is that even more ethnic minority staff report that racist discrimination comes from colleagues and managers - although it is less clear how the government intends to tackle this. *The Telegraph* 18 February 2020 [bit.ly/2TtODIQ](https://www.bit.ly/2TtODIQ)

Scotland's bid to end period poverty

Holyrood looks set to pass a bill this spring that would oblige the Scottish Government to provide free sanitary products to women who need them. For years it has been a cause of outrage that VAT or sales taxes are imposed on sanitary products, often meaning that women and girls from poor backgrounds have to ration their use. If (as seems likely) this bill becomes law, it will be a world-first and could have a real impact on women from lower-income households. It will also mean that Scotland has added to its free social care and minimum per-unit alcohol pricing, the ways in which its health and social policies radically differ from England. These differences will provide plenty of material to keep social scientists and clinical researchers busy in the coming decades. *The Economist* 29 February 2020 [econ.st/32FRvQy](https://www.econ.st/32FRvQy)

L'Arche founder in sexual abuse scandal

The ministry of Jean Vanier, bringing dignity and compassion to the care and empowerment of people with disabilities through the many L'Arche communities that he founded, has been globally praised. But now L'Arche has released a report less than a year after his death that shows Vanier was involved in at least six coercive or non-consensual sexual relationships with women between 1970 and 2005. Does such a shocking revelation diminish the work and example of L'Arche? Rather, it reminds us that we are all sinners, and not even the most sainted cannot fall. It is also a reminder of why we must be ever vigilant in our safeguarding of the vulnerable and in our accountability to one another. *The Economist* 29 February 2020 [econ.st/32FgYw](https://www.econ.st/32FgYw)