Other journals in brief

A selection of abstracts of clinically relevant papers from other journals.
The abstracts on this page have been chosen and edited by **Paul Hellyer.**

Monkeypox mucocutaneous lesions…

Patel A, Bilinska J, Tam J C H *et al*. Clinical features and novel presentations of human monkeypox in a central London centre during the 2022 outbreak: descriptive case series. *BMJ* 2022; DOI: 10.1136/bmj-2022-072410.

…may be present with no other symptoms.

By July 2022, 1,735 cases of monkeypox had been identified in the UK, mostly in gay, bisexual or other men who have sex with men. Transmission between humans is mainly through respiratory droplets and direct contact with skin lesions but can also occur via fomites (inanimate objects such as skin cells, bedding and stethoscopes). Classical symptoms include fever, malaise and headache, followed by skin lesions predominantly affecting the face, feet and hands and mucous membranes.

This paper describes the clinical manifestations of monkeypox in 197 cases identified in an infectious diseases centre in South London in May and June 2022. Twenty-seven (13.7%) of the cases had oropharyngeal lesions and nine (4.6%) had tonsillar erythema, pustules, oedema or abscess. In contrast to the classic symptoms described, in one-third of cases, the mucocutaneous signs appeared before the onset of fever.

Most infections are self-limiting, with symptoms lasting 2–4 weeks. Neonates, children and the immunosuppressed are at higher risk of complications.

https://doi.org/10.1038/s41415-022-5086-9

WhatsApp – what's up?

John B, McCreary C, Roberts A. Smartphone technology for communications between clinicians – a scoping review. *J Dent* 2022; **122:** 104112.

High risk of GDPR breaches.

Increasing use of digital communication has highlighted concern that patient confidentiality and privacy may be compromised by the use of smartphones, apps and social media technology which commodifies data. This scoping review of the academic and grey literature covered a range of clinical specialities and included doctors, dentists and nurses.

The functionalities most frequently used were image sharing, instant messaging and video conferencing. Popular apps included WhatsApp, iMessage, Facebook Messenger, Skype and Zoom. None currently comply with GDPR. Few of the papers reviewed acknowledged security concerns.

Apps are monetised by allowing developers to access and exploit data (in this case, sensitive patient information) on a device. Data thus available is frequently not stored in the country of origin and is difficult to access if deletion is requested by the patient. Patient consent to a video consultation cannot be used as an escape from legal obligations under GDPR. Secure channels are available and clinicians need clear guidance, and training on the risks of using insecure communication packages.

https://doi.org/10.1038/s41415-022-5087-8

Root caries – the scourge of the dentate older patient

Fee P A, Cassie H, Clarkson J E *et al*. Development of a root caries prediction model in a population of dental attenders. *Caries Res* 2022; DOI: 10.1159/000526797.

Predictable, so it should be preventable.

As people live for longer, with their natural teeth, root caries prevalence is increasing. Root caries lesions are difficult to restore and even when they are, restorations have a high failure rate. If those at risk of root caries can be identified, then preventive measures can be targeted at those most at risk.

Prediction models were developed from data from the INTERVAL trial (which compared the effects of different recall intervals on oral health). Presence or absence of root caries was recorded for 1,430 participants. Of these, 324 (22.6%) had more than one root caries lesion and 97 (6.8%) had more than three lesions.

For both groups, predictors were increasing age, number of filled teeth (<9), smoking and a lack of knowledge of the 'spit, don't rinse' oral hygiene regime. The sensitivity and specificity for both groups ranged from 70% to 75%. The authors conclude that those at risk of root caries can be identified by examination and patient self-report and that 'it is unlikely that a more predictable or generalisable model will be developed in the future.'

https://doi.org/10.1038/s41415-022-5088-7

To U or not to U – stat is the question

Cro S, Kahan B C, Rehal S *et al*. Evaluating how clear the questions being investigated in randomised trials are: systematic review of estimands. *BMJ* 2022; DOI: 10.1136/bmj-2022-070146.

Statisticians speak a different language.

Mann-Whitney's U, Spearman's correlation, Cronbach's alpha – statistical tests about which we often read in academic journals. I trust the statistician to choose the correct test for that particular piece of research. Consequently, I trust that the paper answers the question being asked.

But what if even the question isn't clear? In this review of 255 randomised trials from six high impact medical journals over one year, the specific question being asked was found to be unclear in 46% of them. The statistical term for the question being asked in a trial is the estimand – not the estimator, which is the statistical method, nor the estimate, which is the numerical answer to the estimand.

The estimand therefore should be described in all trial reports 'so that the precise research questions…can be understood by all.' Breaking down the technical language enables 'transparent interpretation for all without the need for statistical knowledge.' There is an interesting commentary here: https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.o2108.

https://doi.org/10.1038/s41415-022-5089-6