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IN BRIEF

EPILEPSY

Levetiracetam could improve seizure control during pregnancy

In women with epilepsy, pregnancy is often associated with worsened seizure control. Newer antiepileptic drugs (AEDs) have a more-favourable adverse effect profile than older AEDs, but they have been associated with insufficient seizure control during pregnancy. A new registry-based study of 1,111 pregnancies in Australia suggests that levetiracetam monotherapy provides seizure control that is comparable to older AEDs, with little or no teratogenic potential.

Original article Vajda, F. J. *et al.* The efficacy of the newer antiepileptic drugs in controlling seizures in pregnancy. *Epilepsia* doi:10.1111/epi.12711

ALZHEIMER DISEASE

Increased astrocytic γ -aminobutyric acid release in AD

Astrocytes that surround amyloid plaques become reactive in Alzheimer disease (AD), but their role in AD pathogenesis is poorly understood. Using a mouse model of AD, Jo *et al.* have discovered that reactive astrocytes produce abundant γ -aminobutyric acid (GABA). Suppression of aberrant GABA secretion rescued the AD-like impairments in synaptic plasticity, learning, and memory, suggesting that selective inhibition of astrocytic GABA release might alleviate AD.

Original article Jo, S. *et al.* GABA from reactive astrocytes impairs memory in mouse models of Alzheimer's disease. *Nature* doi:10.1038/nm.3639

NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS

No evidence for efficiency of weighted blankets in improving sleep in children with autism spectrum disorder

Weighted blankets have been suggested to improve sleep quality in children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), but their efficacy has not been tested in randomized controlled trials (RCTs). In the first crossover RCT assessing the benefits of weighted blankets on sleep, weighted blankets did not improve any of the study outcomes (total sleep time, sleep-onset latency, sleep efficiency) in 67 children and adolescents with ASD and severe sleep problems. The participants and their parents, however, subjectively preferred the weighted blanket over a usual-weight blanket.

Original article Gringras, P. *et al.* Weighted blankets and sleep in autistic children –a randomized controlled trial. *Pediatrics* doi:10.1542/peds.2013-4285

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Rapid screening for remyelination-promoting drugs using micropillar arrays

Recent findings suggest that oligodendroglia can myelinate axon-like artificial structures, opening an opportunity for high-throughput functional screening for potential drugs for demyelinating disorders, such as multiple sclerosis. Feng Mei and colleagues developed 96-well plates with conical micropillar arrays that enable automated screening for compounds that could promote remyelination. Mei *et al.* validated their method by testing 1,000 bioactive molecules and found that certain antimuscarinic compounds facilitated remyelination and oligodendrocyte differentiation, although the results need to be confirmed *in vivo*.

Original article Mei, F. *et al.* Micropillar arrays as a high-throughput screening platform for therapeutics in multiple sclerosis. *Nat. Med.* doi:10.1038/nm.3618