

Mitigating pandemic H1N1 influenza

The epidemiological characteristics of pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza do not differ substantially from those of seasonal influenza. This is the conclusion drawn by Tuite and colleagues from their estimates based on laboratory confirmed cases of the illness. They also found from simulation models that the number of new cases created by a single primary case in a susceptible population (R_0) was relatively low. Strategies to mitigate the spread of the illness could reduce the final size of the pandemic substantially, say the authors. See Research, page 131



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Serum anion gap, bicarbonate level and inflammation

A higher serum anion gap and lower bicarbonate level, despite being within normal limits, were associated with higher levels of inflammatory biomarkers in healthy adults. This is the finding from a cross-sectional study by Farwell and Taylor of 4525 health adults in the United States who participated in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. The authors propose that increased production of organic acid possibly mediates the chronic inflammatory state that increases the risk of coronary artery disease and cancer. See Research, page 137

Prenatal ultrasonography proliferates

The rate of prenatal ultrasonography increased substantially between 1996 and 2006. In the final year of the study, nearly one in five women underwent four or more ultrasound examinations during the second and third trimester. Moreover, the increase in use of prenatal ultrasonography did not reflect changes in maternal risk. These are findings from a cross-sectional population-based study from Ontario by You and colleagues. See Research, page 143



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Insecticide-treated mosquito nets for pregnant women

An ultimate rate of coverage of 23% was attained under a Tanzanian voucher system aimed at promoting use of insecticide-treated mosquito nets among pregnant women. Modest attrition at each step involved in the distribution and treatment of the nets amounted to substantially diminished overall coverage. Coverage also varied from 7% among the poorest households to 48% among the richest. See Research, page 152

Asthma in the emergency department

Optimum management of asthma in the emergency department requires rapid access to facilities and personnel capable of delivering bronchodilators appropriately, obtaining objective assessment of the severity of the episode, monitoring the delivery of oxygen and ensuring that every patient has a written plan to manage their condition on discharge. See Reviews, page E55

Physician's legal duty of care



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Davies and Zlotnik Shaul discuss a physician's legal duty of care and the right to refuse to work during a pandemic. Without understanding the legal landscape, physicians could face serious professional and personal consequences. See Analysis, page 167

Leukemia cutis

A four-year-old girl presented with erythematous macules over her cheeks. The rash was not tender or itchy and spread to her arms, back, thighs and buttocks. A skin biopsy showed leukemic blast cells. See Cases, page 171

Protecting patients in ongoing clinical trials

Canada lags behind the United States and Europe in the development of new regulations for the oversight of clinical trials and the development of national standards for research ethics boards. See News, page 124