Access to the internet is enjoyed by 72.9% of Australians and 74.9% of New Zealanders. Most Australasian psychiatrists have internet access and 255 of them are members of Auspsyc, the email list for ANZ psychiatrists, psychiatric registrars and psychiatric medical officers. This list carries on a constant discussion about a range of topics of mutual interest. It also serves as a notice board on which are posted interesting articles.

This column puts into print some of the articles posted on the Auspsyc list in the last several months. The most convenient way to access them is by putting the following URL link into your browser programme.


There you will find this whole article with active links. Alternatively, and more laboriously, you can find the URL for each item in the reference section.

PEOPLE

Steven Pinker is a prolific cognitive neuroscientist from Harvard. He has written and spoken widely on topics such as thought, consciousness, and swearing. He gave two good talks at the TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) conference, on ‘The Stuff of Thought’ and ‘A Brief History of Violence’.

Theodore Dalrymple is an English psychiatrist, now retired and living in France. He continues to write widely on topics such as ‘Real Crime, Fake Justice’, ‘Police and Education’, ‘The Terrorists Among Us’ and Arthur Koestler.

There were interviews with Dalrymple and also Paul Mullen.

There were articles about Thomas Szasz, Erik Erikson, RD Laing, and Paul and Patricia Churchland, the married couple who are philosophers of neuroscience.

There were obituaries for Stella Chess, Paul Watzlawick, and Anthony Clare.

PATHOLOGIZING NORMALITY

There has been increasing concern about normality being pathologized, and drug companies corrupting psychiatry. David Healy on ‘The Latest Mania: Selling Bipolar Disorder’. The number of American children and adolescents treated for bipolar disorder increased 40-fold from 1994 to 2003.

An interview with Christopher Lane, author of ‘Shyness: How Normal Behavior Became a Sickness’.

A review of ‘The Loss of Sadness: How Psychiatry Transformed Normal Sorrow into Depressive Disorder’.

Dr Daniel Carlat, a psychiatrist, came clean about how he got seduced into behaving like a drug rep – ‘Dr Drug Rep’.
SEX AND GENDER

Boys with several older brothers are more likely to be gay, for biological, not social reasons.28 ‘Desperate grandmas: Sex and the aging feminist’.29 ‘Women’s Brains, Men’s Brains’.30 ‘Is there anything good about men?’ A good essay on gender by Roy Baumeister.31 ‘The Brain in Love’.32 Sex surveys of the globe34 and Australia.35

RELIGION AND PSYCHIATRY

Although psychiatrists are among the least religious physicians, they seem to be the most interested in the religious and spiritual dimensions of their patients, according to an article36 on survey data published in the American Journal of Psychiatry.37 Damage to an area of the brain behind the forehead, inches behind the eyes, transforms the way people make moral judgments.38


Some of the current debate about the interface between neuroscience and theology was described by Solomon Snyder in ‘Seeking God in the Brain — Efforts to Localize Higher Brain Functions’.40

TRAUMA

Cognitive therapy or prolonged exposure therapy within 1 month of trauma appears to reduce subsequent posttraumatic stress disorder. But selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors are no better than placebo,41 and debriefing may even do harm.42,43

It’s hard to find evidence for repressed memory in historical sources before the year 1800. Perhaps it’s a culture-bound syndrome?44

BIRTH ORDER, BREASTFEEDING, RACE AND IQ

Are the family clichés true? That the middle one’s always difficult, the eldest is a bossy boots and the youngest is a tearaway?45

Frank Sulloway wrote Freud, Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend. He is also author of Born to Rebel which generated a remarkable controversy about birth order and personality.46-48

IQ scores appear to be increasing.49 Professor James Flynn from Otago University discusses the reasons in his book What is Intelligence: Beyond the Flynn Effect and an essay50 derived from it.

The contributions of genes and environment to IQ continue to be debated.51 New evidence suggests that breastfeeding helps IQ, but only for babies with particular genes.

Double-helix discoverer James Watson got into trouble for remarks about race and IQ.52 There seem to be some inconvenient facts afoot.53

WOW GRAPHICS

There are some exciting things happening in the world of computers, graphics and the interface between people, machines and data.

You may remember the frisson that occurred when Apple Mac, Amiga, and later Windows took over from MS-DOS. And when PowerPoint took over from whiteboards and blackboards. A similar quantum leap is happening now. Technology is becoming more creative, intuitive and playful.

Surface computing. A computer as a coffee table, with images being moved by touching the glass top with your fingers.54

Photosynth. A TED talk by Microsoft architect Blaise Aguera y Arcas with stunning imagery and the ability to link images from all sources into a 3D world.55 Amazing! Try it here.56

Statistics on health and development presented graphically in an easy to follow form by Hans Rosling, a professor of global health at Sweden’s Karolinska Institute.57 Try the Gapminder software.58

A graphic animation of the workings of a cell,59 produced by the Harvard University BioVisions Unit.

More lectures from the TED conference on the theme of ‘How the Mind Works’.60

TUNE UP FIREFOX

If you use Mozilla Firefox61 as your browser, it is possible to tune it to run faster, which is convenient when using the internet.

First, test the speed by downloading a webpage you like — preferably a complex one, that normally takes a while to appear. Get it, hold down SHIFT to bypass your cache, and click RELOAD. Time how long it takes to reload.

Now open a new tab (CTRL+T), and do the following.

Type ‘about:config’ (without the quotes) into the address bar and hit return. Type ‘network.http’ in the filter field, and change the following settings (double-click on them to change them):

Set ‘network.http.pipelining’ to ‘true’
Set ‘network.http.proxy.pipelining’ to ‘true’
Set ‘network.http.pipelining.maxrequests’ to 30. This will allow it to make 30 requests at once.

Next, right-click anywhere and select New > Integer. Name it ‘nglayout.initialpaint.delay’ and set its value to ‘0’. This value is the amount of time the browser waits before it acts on information it receives.

Now close Firefox and re-open it.
Test your webpage load time again. You should notice a significant increase in speed.

LINKS
5. http://tinyurl.com/38m693
7. http://tinyurl.com/2hr8fj
11. http://tinyurl.com/2onyya
17. http://tinyurl.com/qp5r
18. http://tinyurl.com/2qy4ee
27. http://tinyurl.com/2efox9
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