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MORE OF THE SAME ABOUT ANTIBIOTICS

Will antibiotics soon be useless. BBC news reports that: "The world is on the cusp of a "post-antibiotic era", scientists have warned after finding bacteria resistant to drugs used when all other treatments have failed.

Their report, published in the Lancet, identifies bacteria able to shrug off colistin in patients and livestock in China. Dr Liz Tayler, the World Health Organisation's antimicrobial resistance secretariat, told BBC Radio 4's Today programme that the finding meant that global spread of the resistant bacteria was likely. If the spread of resistance was not halted, she warned, common infections will become untreatable and people will die as a result."

"We just have to take action now," she said.

CAPPING AGENCY STAFF

Back in May Laura Donnelly reported in the Telegraph: "NHS spending on temporary staff has risen by one third in a year, plunging the health service into "catastrophic" levels of debt. A record £3.3 billion was spent on agency nurses and doctors in the last financial year — twice what had been planned. Regulators have revealed that in just one year, spending on temporary workers has risen by £800 million, which is equal to the total NHS deficit across the country."

She gave details: "NHS trusts are spending up to £3,200 for one doctor to cover a single shift, with payments of up to £2,200 for a nurse to work 12 hours. The sums mean trusts are paying rates equivalent to a salary of more than £700,000. A significant chunk of this is paid to the agencies providing the workers."

So something had to be done — but what? The BBC has the answer: "A cap on spending on NHS agency staff comes into force in England on Monday, to save £1bn over the next three years. By April, NHS trusts will not be able to pay agency staff, such as doctors and nurses, more than 55% more for a shift than a permanent member of staff."

So far so good, but the NHS also has to stop treating loyal staff like shit. At the moment, anyone with any sense is leaving the health service and doing locum/agency work where you can pretty well name your price and terms of service.

SWEET KIDS

Back in the 1960s Walter Mischel, a psychologist, set up a 'Marshmallow Test' whereby kids could have one sweet if they grabbed it as soon as it was offered or two if they had enough willpower to wait. This was shown to correlate well with success in later life.

Now Jess Staufenberg reports in the Independent on a study published in The Journal of Pediatrics, which showed that: "Being able to withstand temptation from raisins hidden under a cup for more than a minute has been linked by scientists to better academic achievement when they are older. And children born prematurely were the most likely to take the treat before the allotted time was over, they found.

The significance? Professor Dieter Wolke, author of the study, said the raisin game was an "easy and effective tool" for identifying children at risk of attention and learning problems.

I'm glad this test wasn't widely used when I was a child. I'd have been written off straight away!

CASH CRISIS

The NHS overspend has hit £1.6bn — indeed some say it will be as much as £2bn. But George Osborne is riding to the rescue. Patrick Wintour and Nicholas Watt report in The Guardian that George "will hand the NHS in England an urgent £3.8bn increase in funding to help it contend with the pressures caused by staff shortages, an ageing population and growing health demands." It comes with conditions, though ... including a move towards a '7 day NHS' ... so it'll be interesting to see how much will be left over for dealing with the glaring deficiencies in the service as it stands.

The Guardian goes on to say: "Osborne is likely be criticised for raiding other parts of the Department of Health's budget on Wednesday, and especially for forcing trainee nurses to take out student loans in future, as he has decided to phase out publicly funded nursing bursaries. Health Education England currently spends about £820m a year supporting the education of about 60,000 would-be nurses."

This is because George Osborne has realised we have far too many nurses so we need to make the profession as unattractive as possible for young people with an ambition to wear the uniform. What's that you say? We DON'T have enough nurses? Oh lumme! Someone tell George quick!!!

The big problem in the NHS is the arbitrary way funding is distributed — so, when there's a cash injection, those awash with dosh are likely to get more whilst those with grossly inadequate budgets will be further penalised. The plight of Mid-Essex is just one example of this lottery. It's a scandal — and one that demands immediate attention.

Dr John