Ten most wanted
May, 2005

1 The metabolic syndrome (Seminar, April 16)
Eckel RH, et al. The metabolic syndrome. DOI:

2 Systemic adjuvant therapies for breast cancer
(Article, May 14)
Early Breast Cancer Trialsists’ Collaborative Group (EBCTCG). Effects of chemotherapy and hormonal
therapy for early breast cancer on recurrence and 15-year survival: an overview of the randomised trials. DOI:

3 Breast cancer (Seminar, May 14)
Veronese U, et al. Breast cancer. DOI: 10.1016/S0140-

4 Type 2 diabetes (Seminar, April 9)
Stumvoll M, et al. Type 2 diabetes: principles of
pathogenesis and therapy. DOI: 10.1016/S0140-

5 Million Women Study (Article, April 30)
Million Women Study Collaborators. Endometrial cancer
and hormone-replacement therapy in the Million
Women Study Collaborators. Endometrial cancer
and hormone-replacement therapy in the Million

6 Abdominal aortic aneurysm (Seminar, April 30)
Sakalihasan N, et al. Abdominal aortic aneurysm. DOI:

7 Epidemiology: multiplicity (Series, April 30)
Schulz KF, Grimes DA. Multiplicity in randomised trials I:
endpoints and treatments. DOI: 10.1016/S0140-

8 Malaria (Seminar, April 23)
Greenwood BM, et al. Malaria. DOI: 10.1016/S0140-

9 Aplastic anaemia (Seminar, May 7)
Brodsky RA, Jones RJ. Aplastic anaemia. DOI:

10 CB, and obesity (Article, April 16)
Van Gaal LF, et al. Effects of the cannabinoid-1 receptor
blocker rimonabant on weight reduction and cardiovascular risk factors in overweight patients: 1-year experience from the RIO-Europe study. DOI:

Lunch with The Lancet
Jennie Brand-Miller

Jennie Brand-Miller is riding the wave of a diet craze while
keeping her feet firmly on solid scientific ground. Having
spent 20 years researching the glycaemic index (GI) of foods
as professor of human nutrition at the University of Sydney,
Sydney, Australia, she has recently found herself in the less
familiar role of international diet guru.

The principle of GI diets is that not all carbohydrates are
equal. Those in high GI foods are absorbed quickly, resulting
in a blood sugar spike; low GI alternatives are digested and
absorbed more slowly. It’s a phenomenon that has been
examined over years of research, and Brand-Miller is aware
of the need to speak from a solid evidence base. “I’m always
conscious that I’m a scientist, I’m an academic, and that
my credibility comes from that, so I’m not going to claim
anything that’s not there in the science.”

We order our food—sea bass and rice for both of us—and
she explains how she got involved in GI by pure chance
when, in 1981, a paper by David Jenkins from the University
of Toronto landed on her desk. She was instantly intrigued
by the findings, which challenged existing dogma about the
effects of starchy and sugars on blood sugar levels.

At the time she was investigating Aboriginal bush foods,
so assigned a student to conduct a GI study on them.
“Surprise-surprise they were low GI”, Brand-Miller says. Her
group’s initial GI studies focused on blood sugar control in
diabetics, as had Jenkins’. She also investigated the effect
of low GI foods on endurance in athletes. Over the years,
evidence accumulated that the approach worked for dia-
abetics, but the GI concept remained controversial. “I guess
I’ve been up against a negative, sceptical profession the
whole time”, she says. The American Diabetic Association
was opposed to GI, she says, but recently published a state-
ment affirming that the glycaemic index provides benefit
beyond that of total carbohydrate intake for blood sugar
control. “Now I think we’ve jumped a hurdle”, she says.

For a long time, Brand-Miller was reluctant to talk about
GI and weight control. Eventually, she capitulated and
is now in the midst of a phenomenon. Meanwhile, her
laboratory has six concurrent studies underway, and she is
also running a GI testing facility that charges international
food companies for accurate measurements of the
glycaemic index of their products. “Sometimes I feel like a
human centrifuge, the rate at which things are going on”,
she says, turning down dessert. “But I’d be mad, wouldn’t I,
to give up this opportunity . . . after all, our conventional
low fat diet has failed in practice in public health. This is a
marketing opportunity for good nutrition.”

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The ten most wanted Lancet articles downloaded from ScienceDirect (see
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