PCR for endophthalmitis detection
Screening ocular samples with eubacterial polymerase chain reaction (PCR) techniques can help identify endophthalmitis-associated bacteria following cataract surgery, reported French researchers. The researchers compared conventional culture methods and PCR in ocular samples of aqueous humour and vitreous samples from 100 consecutive patients who presented with acute post-cataract endophthalmitis. Sampling aqueous humour produced similar detection rates with both methods. However, PCR was much better when it came to screening vitreous samples obtained from vitrectomy, detecting bacteria in 70 per cent of cases compared to only nine per cent with culture. The researchers believe the two methods could improve endophthalmitis evaluation when used together.


Mitochondrial DNA and AMD risk
Genetic variation in mitochondrial DNA of mitochondria appears to contribute to AMD risk. In the first study to examine the mitochondrial genome for changes associated with AMD, researchers found that a variation in mitochondrial DNA known as mitochondrial haplogroup T. The study of 400 AMD patients and age-matched controls revealed that 4917G, a non-synonymous mitochondrial DNA polymorphism associated with mitochondrial haplogroup T appears to confer an increased risk for AMD. This variation in the mitochondrial genome was an independent predictor of AMD following multivariate adjustment for well-known nuclear genetic factors. The researchers comment that this should not be surprising, since mitochondria are vitally important in free radical production, apoptosis and cellular energy production.


EPO gene and retinopathy
Patients with a copy of a mutant erythropoietin (EPO) gene appear to have an increased risk of both proliferative diabetic retinopathy and renal disease. Researchers compared 1618 people with PDR and ESRD, and 954 diabetes patients without any eye or kidney disease in three separate populations. People with the mutant EPO gene had increased risk of developing retinopathy and nephropathy. One implication of the study is that caution may be warranted when using EPO to treat patients with chronic renal disease, particularly those with diabetes. Another implication is that developing drugs that blunt the effects of erythropoietin could represent a new approach to treating retinopathy.


Rx - politeness
Citing a positive experience when visiting a European doctor, a US physician is encouraging his colleagues to practice a more etiquette-based medical approach. The Harvard psychiatrist advises physicians to pay more attention to the doctor-patient relationship, showing patients more respect and attention. He notes that this would be better than the rarely smiling physician staring at the computer screen or chart that many patients encounter. He also calls for these ideas to be integrated into medical education and postgraduate training. He proposes the following checklist as an example of etiquette when first meeting with a hospitalised patient:

1. Ask permission to enter the room; wait for an answer.
2. Introduce yourself, showing ID badge.
3. Shake hands (wear glove if needed).
4. Sit down. Smile if appropriate.
5. Briefly explain your role on the team.
6. Ask the patient how he or she is feeling about being in the hospital.

He notes that this approach, "would put professionalism and patient satisfaction at the centre of the clinical encounter and bring back some of the elements of ritual that have always been an important part of the healing profession."