

Reading vintage news of 1909: change in prevalence of group B *Streptococcus*

To the Editor—We read the paper on change in the prevalence of group B *Streptococcus* (GBS), published in the December 2009 issue containing data collected in 2002,¹ with as much excitement as reading about news that occurred 100 years ago! The authors did not even consider it prudent to update their epidemiology data and the reference list. They report an alarming 13-fold increase in the prevalence of GBS colonisation and early-onset GBS (9.45/1000 births) from 1992 to 2002. Yet recent data show that between 2004 and 2007, early-onset GBS in all Hospital Authority hospitals was around 1 (0.7-1.1) per 1000 births only.² Any information, correct or not, is rendered valueless with the passing of time. Things have inevitably moved a long way since!

This absurdly out-of-date report begs the question: why was this paper not published in 2003 or 2004? Surely, if the study has a useful message, it should have been made public—the earlier the better. After all, local research should primarily aim to help

local practitioners to provide optimal medical care. The reason for this time-lapse can only be speculated upon. Either the paper was hibernating and has been newly rediscovered or worse, it embarked on an arduous journey, passing through editors' in-baskets at numerous overseas journals, waiting for acceptance (and thus acquiring better merit points for academic advancement) and finally, after a 7-year odyssey round the globe, it landed where its journey began: home.

We urge the editors of the *Hong Kong Medical Journal* to refrain from publishing outdated reports in the future.

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References

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