

# Trends, triumphs and tragedies Unpicking the Oscars red carpet

G2 Cover



Rowan Williams  
Teenagers need space,  
not buzzers

Comment Page 34

Nancy Banks-Smith  
Portillo on Thatcher or  
'How I Missed Becoming  
Leader By  
A Whisker'

TV Review,  
G2 Page 31



£0.80  
Tuesday 26.02.08  
Published  
in London and  
Manchester  
guardian.co.uk

# the guardian

## Prozac, used by 40m people, does not work say scientists

## Obama camp claims smear over turban photograph



PHOTOGRAPH: ALAMY

Ewen MacAskill Washington

Barack Obama's campaign team accused Hillary Clinton's beleaguered staff yesterday of mounting a dirty tricks operation by circulating a picture of him in African dress, feeding into false claims on US websites that he is a Muslim.

David Plouffe, Obama's campaign manager, described it as "the most shameful, offensive fear-mongering we've seen from either party in this election". Obama has spent much of the campaign emphasising he is a Christian not a Muslim and did not study at a madrasa.

Aides for Clinton, who is fighting a last-ditch battle to keep her hopes of the White House alive, initially tried to brush off the furore, but later denied having anything to do with the distribution of the picture.

"I just want to make it very clear that we were not aware of it, the campaign didn't sanction it and don't know anything about it," Clinton spokesman Howard Wolfson told reporters. "None of us have seen the email in question."

Obama and Clinton next go to the polls in the Texas and Ohio primaries next week. If Clinton loses either, her bid for the Democratic nomination could be over.

The picture showing Obama in a turban during a visit to Kenya in 2006 first appeared on the Drudge Report website yesterday. The site said it was circulated by Clinton's staffers and quoted one saying: "Wouldn't we be seeing this on the cover of every magazine if it were [Clinton]?"

The picture was taken when Obama

Continued on page 2 >>



Barack Obama in Kenya in 2006

## Analysis of unseen trials and other data concludes it is no better than placebo

Sarah Boseley Health editor

Prozac, the bestselling antidepressant taken by 40 million people worldwide, does not work and nor do similar drugs in the same class, according to a major review released today.

The study examined all available data on the drugs, including results from clinical trials that the manufacturers chose not to publish at the time. The trials compared the effect on patients taking the drugs with those given a placebo or sugar pill.

When all the data was pulled together, it appeared that patients had improved – but those on placebo improved just as much as those on the drugs.

The only exception is in the most severely depressed patients, according to the authors – Prof Irving Kirsch from the department of psychology at Hull University and colleagues in the US and Canada. But that is probably because the placebo stopped working so well, they say, rather than the drugs having worked better.

"Given these results, there seems little reason to prescribe antidepressant

medication to any but the most severely depressed patients, unless alternative treatments have failed," says Kirsch. "This study raises serious issues that need to be addressed surrounding drug licensing and how drug trial data is reported."

The paper, published today in the journal PLoS (Public Library of Science) Medicine, is likely to have a significant impact on the prescribing of the drugs. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (Nice) already recommends that counselling should be tried before doctors prescribe antidepressants. Kirsch, who was one of the consultants for the guidelines, says the new analysis "would suggest that the prescription of antidepressant medications might be restricted even more".

The review breaks new ground because Kirsch and his colleagues have obtained for the first time what they believe is a full set of trial data for four antidepressants.

They requested the full data under freedom of information rules from the Food and Drug Administration, which licenses medicines in the US and requires all data when it makes a decision.

The pattern they saw from the trial results of fluoxetine (Prozac), paroxetine (Seroxat), venlafaxine (Effexor) and nefazodone (Serzone) was consistent. "Using complete data sets (including unpublished data) and a substantially larger data set of this type than has been previously reported, we find the overall effect of new-generation antidepressant medication is below recommended criteria for clinical significance," they write.

Two more frequently prescribed antidepressants were omitted from the study because scientists were unable to obtain all the data.

Concerns have been raised in recent years about the side-effects of this class of antidepressant. Evidence that they could prompt some young people to consider suicide led to a warning to doctors not to prescribe them for the under-18s – with the exception of Prozac, which was considered more effective than the rest.

In adults, however, the depression-beating benefits were thought to outweigh the risks. Since its launch in the US in 1988, some 40 million people have taken Prozac, earning tens of billions of dollars for the

manufacturer, Eli Lilly. Although the patent lapsed in 2001, fluoxetine continues to make the company money – it is now the active ingredient in Sarafem, a pill sold by Lilly for premenstrual syndrome.

Eli Lilly was defiant last night. "Extensive scientific and medical experience has demonstrated that fluoxetine is an effective antidepressant," it said in a statement. "Since its discovery in 1972, fluoxetine has become one of the world's most-studied medicines. Lilly is proud of the difference fluoxetine has made to millions of people living with depression."

A spokesman for GlaxoSmithKline, which makes Seroxat, said the authors had failed to acknowledge the "very positive" benefits of the treatment and their conclusions were "at odds with what has been seen in actual clinical practice".

He added: "This analysis has only examined a small subset of the total data available while regulatory bodies around the world have conducted extensive reviews and evaluations of all the data available, and this one study should not be used to cause unnecessary alarm and concern for patients."

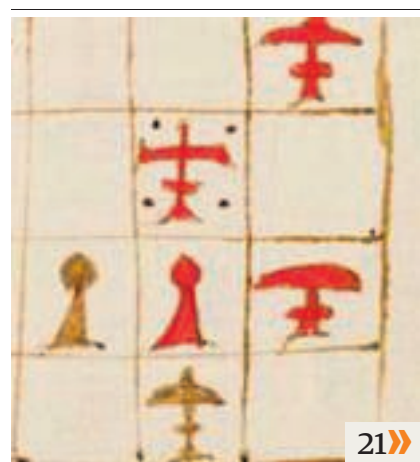
### National

#### Killer linked to teenager murder

Levi Bellfield, who faces three life sentences today for the murders of young women, is a prime suspect in the Milly Dowler murder, police said. Detectives are to reinterview Bellfield, 39, after he was convicted at the Old Bailey yesterday of murdering students Amelie Delagrange, 22, and Marsha McDonnell, 19, and attempting to kill schoolgirl Kate Sheedy, 18. Police have offered a £50,000 reward for information about Dowler's murder. The 13-year-old was killed in 2002. Officers are also investigating links to at least 20 other attacks on women including the murders of Judith Gold and Bellfield's schoolfriend Patsy Morris.

6-7 >>>

### International



Your move ... who has been revealed as the possible illustrator of this chess puzzle, thought to date back to 1500? 21 >>>

### International

#### Food too costly for UN to feed starving

Soaring prices for food on world markets means the United Nations can no longer buy enough to keep malnutrition at bay for 73 million people in 78 countries. In a stark warning, the UN's World Food Programme says annual price increases of up to 40% on foodstuffs and dramatic hikes in fuel costs put some of its operations at risk. Officials say the extraordinary increases are due to a "perfect storm" of factors, including demand for animal feed to meet meat consumption by increasingly prosperous populations in India and China, the use of more land and produce to make biofuels, and the impact of climate change.

18-19 >>>

### Financial

#### Russians head list of £100m tax evaders

Britain's top taxman yesterday warned wealthy tax evaders they were running out of places to hide their riches after the authorities obtained details of secret accounts in Liechtenstein. Revenue and Customs is after up to 30,000 individuals who together owe more than £100m in back tax as its pursuit of foreigners registered as non-domiciles gathers momentum. These include many Russians, the Guardian has learned, who may be trying to shift accounts to other tax havens. The Liechtenstein revelations strengthen the hand of chancellor Alistair Darling as he prepares to deal with non-doms in the March 12 budget.

26 >>>

### Sport

#### Croatian backlash at Birmingham player

Security staff had to restrain Croatian journalists at Birmingham City's training ground yesterday after they tried to force their way into the car of Martin Taylor, the defender whose tackle on Arsenal's striker Eduardo da Silva left the Croatian international with a broken leg – and facing the prospect that his career may be at an end. It emerged yesterday that Eduardo may take around nine months to recover from his injuries. He has undergone surgery for a fractured left fibula and an open dislocation of his ankle. Taylor has been subject of death threats and a website set up to comment on the incident has received 27,000 messages.

Sport, 1 >>>