

Science & Technology

Study Hall: Fall 2019

Seven new research briefs from Columbia.

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Colleen Deng

Head start for your heart

Young adults with high blood pressure or cholesterol are up to 65 percent more likely to have heart disease later in life, regardless of whether they get those numbers down in middle age, new research shows. “The take-home point of the study is: don’t wait to make healthy choices,” says author [Andrew Moran](#) ’01PS, ’02PH, a Columbia associate professor of medicine.

Europe’s real terrorism problem

[Richard J. McAlexander](#), a Columbia PhD candidate in political science, has found that incidents of Islamic terrorism in Western Europe don’t increase following waves of immigration from non-European countries, as some commentators have suggested, but that far-right terrorist attacks against immigrants do tend to spike in such periods.

PTSD breakthrough

Columbia neuroscientists [Eric Kandel](#) and Joseph Rayman have identified a protein in the brain that suppresses fearful memories in female mice. The discovery could lead to new treatments for posttraumatic stress disorder in women, who are disproportionately affected by the condition.

The big melt

The Himalayan glaciers are now shrinking twice as quickly as they were two decades ago, a trend that, should it continue, will threaten freshwater supplies for hundreds of millions of people across Asia, according to research by [Joshua Maurer](#), a PhD candidate at Columbia’s Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory.

Making contact

A team of medical researchers led by Columbia neurologist [Jan Claassen](#) has shown that routine EEG recordings of the brain, when analyzed using new computer algorithms, can identify brain-damaged patients who are still conscious despite being unable to move or respond to prompts. Claassen says the technique could eventually help physicians and families better care for patients who appear comatose.

Wait watchers

[Jing Dong '14](#)SEAS, an assistant professor at Columbia Business School, has found that hospitals can minimize congestion in emergency rooms by posting wait times online, thus encouraging patients to visit hospitals with the shortest delays.

Lightweight specs

Columbia engineers, led by applied-physics professor [Nanfang Yu](#), have found a way to make magnifying lenses that are flat rather than convex and thinner than a human hair. They say their lenses could reduce the size, weight, and cost of many optical instruments, including cameras, microscopes, telescopes, and eyeglasses.

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