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EDITOR'S CHOICE

BMJ

Next week the long awaited MMR balloon goes up: Britain will begin to take seriously the attempt to eliminate measles, mumps, and rubella. Sir John Badnoch describes the thinking behind the introduction of the new vaccine (p 750), while a new report on the nation's health, which Professor Tony Mitchell criticises (p 749), makes clear how poorly Britain has done with immunisation. A survey on p 770 shows that two thirds of children aged 1-2 years do not have antibodies against measles and that four fifths do not have antibodies against mumps and rubella. That is the "baseline," and let us hope that it is very different in two years' time. The government guidelines for improving our performance are reproduced on p 780,

while on p 755 Professor David Hull discusses how vaccinating children seen in hospital might be one way of helping to reach the goal, particularly because the children seen most often in casualty are just the ones least likely to be vaccinated. Meanwhile, on p 779 a general practitioner describes the bureaucratic problems that may block progress: nurses in his practice were disciplined for giving injections into the buttock rather than the arm despite evidence that the buttock may be the better site for vaccination. On p 801 Dr Peter Benson provides relief from MMR in an insightful essay that argues that "compassion [may be] a dangerous virtue for doctors."