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EDITOR'S CHOICE

On p 536 surgeon Anne Stotter describes how patients infected with HIV receive much better care than patients with breast cancer. Patients with HIV infection have treatment tailored to meet their needs and are much better counselled, offered more time, and seen in clinics where "coffee and magazines are at hand." In contrast, patients with breast cancer are rushed through and often counselled by inexperienced junior doctors. Miss Stotter's conclusion is not that the NHS is overdoing it for patients with HIV infection but rather that the better standards should be available for all. Surgeons are also speaking out on p 490 in a survey on transplantation that makes it clear that living donors could be used much more in Britain, helping to

overcome the shortage of organs. The debate over the NHS review continues—entwined this week with the doctors' annual pay review (p 532)—but one of its central planks is destroyed on p 500: the introduction to the NHS review mentions that general practitioner referral rates to hospital vary 20-fold, but A T Moore and M O Roland show that this large variation is probably a statistical artefact, arising from the small size of most of the studies of general practitioners' referrals. Thus another "well known fact" is gone, but on p 524 an old shepherd's tale makes a comeback: although patients at St George's Hospital do not behave like sheep and deliver more commonly at the flood tide, those at St Thomas's Hospital do.