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EDITOR'S CHOICE

Sickle cell disease crops up at both ends of this week's journal. In an editorial Sally Davies examines new evidence on the pathophysiology of the painful crises, gives advice on how to manage them, and concludes that there is an urgent need for Britain to develop a structure for coordinating trials of new treatments (p 1551). Ivan Cox, meanwhile, reviews a television programme made by sufferers deploring the poor services available to them (p 1613). Institutionalised racism, they argue, is the cause. Physiotherapy exercises for back pain are also under attack (p 1572). Although they are probably the commonest treatment for back pain, a group from

Maastricht could not find evidence in a review of 23 randomised trials that they are of benefit. High costs without benefit might also accrue, argues Enid Mumford from Manchester Business School, if the NHS proceeds too fast with installing computer systems without making sure that they are relevant to the users' needs (p 1587). Finally, we hear from Charles Dickens (p 1607). He tells the story of a medical student who at a necropsy absconded with a stomach containing the cast of a door key swallowed a long time before. The student had a new key made and then used it to rob the house of the "deceased gentleman."