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EDITOR'S CHOICE

BMJ

London can be a nightmare, not only for tourists but also for ministers of health. The paradox is that London absorbs more health care resources than other parts of Britain but provides relatively fewer services (p 945). Last week the government set up a group to take an overall look at London's health care services, but Virginia Beardshaw makes clear how the group—the latest in a long line—faces deep seated problems (p 939). One special London problem is the many homeless people, and Mary Black and others show how the homeless use acute inpatient services 2.5 times more often than other Londoners (p 958). Prevention is always on the agenda these days and is often seen as a panacea, but a group from Sheffield shows that the cholesterol reducing diets suggested in current guidelines have only a very small effect (p 953).

Smoking is the preventive issue that matters more than any other, and a paper responding to *The Health of the Nation* outlines a strategy that any government should adopt if it is serious about reducing deaths from tobacco use (p 973), while a paper from general practice shows how smoking adolescents have more health problems than their non-smoking contemporaries but are willing to enter into contracts with their doctors to stop (p 947). Finally, another modern panacea—computers—is also being doubted: P H Stanley, a general practitioner from Devon, argues that practices without computers should be encouraged as a well run manual system will produce the same results as a computer system, is more user friendly, requires fewer staff, is cheaper, and saves paper (p 971).