

BMJ

SATURDAY 9 NOVEMBER 1991



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EDITOR'S CHOICE

BMJ

The *BMJ* has generally eschewed devoting journals to special issues because of the long delays in publication that may result. We do, however, try to publish related articles at the same time—not least because when articles are submitted at the same time on related subjects it suggests that “something is up.” Thus problems are clearly arising from the increase in minor surgery in British general practice, and an editorial (p 1149) and three papers (pp 1177, 1179, 1180) discuss them. The problems include not submitting specimens for histological examination despite evidence that general practitioners often get the initial diagnosis wrong; incompletely excising lesions, which may be malignant; and using the wrong fixative or no fixative at

all. Another live debate is over the definition of AIDS to be used in Africa (pp 1151, 1185, 1189). Because of the shortage of laboratory facilities a purely clinical definition has been used in surveillance, but the papers we publish today are arguing that the time may have come to include a positive HIV test result in the definition. Finally, in three articles we look at providing parents of children with rare syndromes with information and support. Angela Gerrard describes how her family has coped with having a child with a metabolic disease (p 1208), while an editorial and a news item describe a new comprehensive directory of information on syndromes affecting children produced by the self help organisation Contact a Family (pp 1152, 1154).