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EDITOR'S CHOICE

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It is ironic that one of the oldest forms of audit may now be under threat from the same set of NHS reforms that have given such prominence to medical audit: as Professor I Lauder points out in his editorial, post-mortem examinations are under threat because of uncertainty about who will pay for them (p 1214). Paula Whitty and colleagues also suggest that the value of necropsies may be wasted if the findings are not communicated promptly to clinicians and general practitioners (p 1244). Two correspondents, however, challenge the view that necropsies are a good form of audit—or ever can be in England given the coroners' system (p 1270).

An audit for health care systems is suggested by Donald Light, who has devised the Cochrane test,

based on Archie Cochrane's classic *Effectiveness and Efficiency* (p 1253). On this test the NHS doesn't come out very well—but then neither does any other health care system. Stephen Frankel and colleagues highlight another problem for the NHS: despite wanting to give patients dates for admission when they are first seen surgeons find that they can't if elective surgery has to compete with urgent work for the same facilities (p 1257). On a more cheerful note Colin Douglas ponders the life enhancing characteristics of medical reunions (p 1274). And, finally, on a practical note, we publish this week Robert Winter's article on how to write up staff rounds for publication in the *BMJ*—in the hope that readers will submit accounts of their own hospitals' teaching rounds (p 1258).