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EDITOR'S CHOICE

BMJ

The use and misuse of therapeutic drugs have emerged as the themes of our first issue of the year. Commercial pressure may lead to misuse, as occurs with anti-diarrhoeal drugs used to treat acute diarrhoea in children (p 1) and may occur with drugs to treat age associated memory impairment before the entity has been adequately defined (p 5). Commercial pressure operates in a different way with zidovudine, making it very expensive. A group from the Nordic countries shows, however, that doses lower than those commonly used are just as effective in treating patients with AIDS or advanced HIV infection (p 13): as a result money may be saved and adverse effects reduced. Adverse effects are always a problem, and ophthalmologists from Birmingham and Leeds describe five cases of acute angle closure glaucoma being provoked by nebulised ipratropium and salbutamol (p 40); this side effect may be more common than is appreciated. These articles illustrating the complexities of using

drugs make a good backcloth for a collection of articles analysing the prescribing interface between general practitioners and hospitals (pp 4, 29, and 31). Too often the prescribing buck is being passed backwards and forwards in circumstances where cooperation rather than antagonism is needed. Finally, some housekeeping: pressure on space in the journal has had two consequences. Firstly, this issue does not (as has been usual in the first issue of the year) contain our full instructions for authors, but a shortened version appears (opposite p 62 (CR edition), opposite p 23 (GP edition), or inside the front cover (overseas edition)) and there have anyway been only a few changes from those that appeared on 5 January 1991 on p 40. Secondly, we are shortening our time limit for obituaries from six months to three months. We are also, however, encouraging authors of obituaries to give a cause of death (p 51); the information may well spark some epidemiological hypotheses.