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## EDITOR'S CHOICE

# BMJ

This week's journal includes the scientific equivalent of a murder case reopened. In 1973 K W Cross observed that in the 1950s there had been a hold up in the otherwise steady fall in first day neonatal mortality. He hypothesised that the hold up had been caused by paediatricians restricting the use of oxygen for fear of causing retrolental fibroplasia. His hypothesis was widely accepted, but now R K Whyte has shown that the timing and course of the hold up were not consistent with oxygen restriction being the cause (p 343); Whyte has also shown an affect on the stillbirth rate, which could not possibly have been caused by oxygen restriction. If he is right a new villain must be sought, and he points the finger at strontium-90 from atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons. It is hard to see where this study might lead, but changes should follow from the paper on organ donation from intensive care units (p 349). The authors suggest that a 20% increase in cadaveric kidney donors could be achieved by two measures: testing more often for brain stem

death and reducing the number of relatives' refusals. Reducing the rate of relatives' refusals might seem difficult, but just such a reduction occurred during sustained publicity about the need for organs in October and November 1989.

Both of these papers require concentrated reading to get the full benefit, but lighter reading is also to be had. Oliver Sacks, the American neurologist whose books have won literary prizes and inspired an opera, provides the first of what may be a series of neurological curios: on p 364 he describes the case of a woman who had not the familiar phantom limb but rather a phantom face. Meanwhile, Mark Hargreaves (p 390) looks from the receiving end at general practitioners appointing new partners. His advice is that they should forget the hoops, psychologists, and graphologists and see people as they normally are. But he knew things were going badly for him when his 4 year old son started throwing snowballs at the senior partner—with depressing accuracy.