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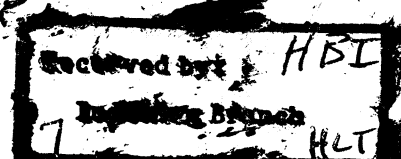


BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL NO 6827 VOLUME 304

INTERNATIONAL

Editorials

- 585 **The human antibody library**
Stephen J Russell, Meirion B Llewelyn, Robert E Hawkins
- 586 **Seat belts in pregnancy**
Malcolm Pearce
- 587 **Missing women**
Amartya Sen
- 588 **On your bikes**
Fiona Godlee
- 589 **Photodynamic therapy for cancer**
A Mutaz Abulafi, Norman S Williams
- 590 **Forward dermatology**
Jonathan Rees



News

- 591-596 **Fetal tissue research around the world · Scientific leaders warn of threat to planet · Disposing of fetuses · Charter for disabled people · Crime and the homeless mentally ill · Labour's care document · German emergency medicine's shortcomings · GPs may sue FHSAs · The Week**

Papers

- 597 **Physical activity and stroke in British middle aged men**
Goya Wannamethee, A G Shaper
- 601 **Randomised clinical trial of manipulative therapy and physiotherapy for persistent back and neck complaints: results of one year follow up**
Bart W Koes, Lex M Bouter, Henk van Mameren, Alex H M Essers, Gert J R Verstegen, Domien M Hofhuizen, Jo P Houben, Paul G Knipschild
- 606 **Compliance with diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis immunisation in Bangladesh: factors identifying high risk groups**
Sushila Zeitlyn, A K S Mahmudur Rahman, Birthe H Nielsen, Momota Khatun, Poul-Erik Lund Kofoed, Dilip Mahalanabis
- 609 **Physiotherapy intervention late after stroke and mobility**
Derick T Wade, Fiona M Collen, Gillian F Robb, Charles P Warlow
- 614 **Antenatal teaching of the use of seat belts in pregnancy**
Malcolm Griffiths, Martin McD Usherwood, Philip W Reginaf

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CURRENT SERIAL RECORDS
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General Practice

- 615 **Workload of general practitioners before and after the new contract**
David Hannay, Tim Usherwood, Maria Platts

Education & Debate

- 619 **Regular Review: Potential for extending survival of peripheral intravenous infusions**
J F Hecker
- 625 **For Debate: Educational improvement of the preregistration period of general clinical training**
Peter Richards on behalf of the Council of Deans of United Kingdom Medical Schools and Faculties
- 628 **The road to hell . . .**
Anonymous
- 630 **Medicine in Europe: Equal opportunities: progress so far**
Peter Forster
- 632 **Leading for Health: responses: Management and information**
Cyril Chantler

- 636-650 **Obituary · Correspondence · Medicopolitical Digest · Soundings · Personal View · Medicine and the Media · Medicine and Books · Minerva · (in detail overleaf)**

CONTENTS pages 636-650

636 **Obituary** H K Bourns, G L Ferguson, R N Easlea, J C P Logan, R A C Owen, A W Rattrie

637 **Correspondence**

- | | |
|---|---|
| 637 Measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine: time for a two stage policy?
H Carter and D Gorman | 641 High purity factor VIII concentrates and HIV infection
C A Lee |
| 637 Breathing rate and pneumonia
D Morley and R Brown | 641 Could an outbreak of poliomyelitis occur in the UK?
D Brown and others |
| 638 Epidemic of bronchiolitis in infants
E Doyle and others | 641 Setting a strategy for health
D Breen and others |
| 638 Fetal growth and ratio of placental weight to birth weight
R de Courcy-Wheeler and C Wolfe | 642 Searching published reports
M Bernadt; S Henshaw |
| 638 Early growth and clotting factors in adult life
G Davey Smith and Y Ben-Shlomo | 642 Advance directives
I H Khan |
| 639 Treatment of hypertension in older adults
M J Kendall; C H Hand; G D Johnston | 642 <i>Paediatrics in the Tropics</i>
R G Hendrickse |
| 639 Monoclonal antibodies in sepsis and septic shock
D Neilson and P N Rao | 642 A patient's charter for laboratories
S Bulusu and C M Royle |
| 640 Low protein diets in chronic renal insufficiency
P D Hart and others | 643 Audit: the crucial role of medical records
D Clements |
| 640 Establishment of pregnancy after removal of sperm antibodies in vitro
R Sharma and others | 643 Audit in general practice
E Martin |
| 640 Childhood mortality after a high dose of vitamin A
M Lavender and C Vickery | 643 NHS distribution of funds unfair
E S Williams and others |
| 640 Risk of Down's syndrome and amniocentesis rate
K Spencer and P Carpenter | 643 Europe and nutrition
A Macnair |
| | 644 Who speaks for whom in Europe?
O A Jensen and T E Kennedy |
| | 644 One car down
I H Gibson; G Young; T Waterston |

645 **Medicopolitical Digest**

Measuring party political policies · £10m for DHA purchasing · Task forces' report · Nurse practitioner projects · Cooption of junior members to the armed forces committee

646 **Soundings** Power and dependence Trisha Greenhalgh; Rags to riches James Owen Drife

647 **Personal View** Flying doctor in London Rebecca Sparling

648 **Medicine and the Media**

Patients observed Jane Dawson

Generations of care Rosalind Ramsay and Jeremy Gray

649 **Medicine and Books**

Andrew Steptoe: *Wiley Series in Clinical Psychology*. "The Psychological Treatment of Insomnia" (C A Espie)
Niall P Quinn: *Major Problems in Neurology* 22. "Huntington's Disease" (Ed P S Harper)

650 **Minerva**

EDITOR'S CHOICE

BMJ

In 1896 the *BMJ* published a 10 part series on cycling and health and was generally much in favour of the activity—even for mothers, the aged, and the sick. But the journal also contradicted itself and suggested in the last century that cycling was bad for health, particularly that of women. Now we have more scientific evidence to support our assertions, and Fiona Godlee assesses a BMA report on cycling and argues that it is good for personal and public health and that local authorities should devote more resources to making cycling safer (p 589). Three correspondents also debate the benefits of cycling (p 644), and Ivan Gibson suggests that doctors should desert cars as they once deserted cigarettes. Meanwhile, Goya Wannamethee and Gerry Shaper (p 597) produce evidence from the regional heart study that moderate exercise (which includes cycling) protects against stroke as well as against heart disease.

There are other historical parallels in this week's journal. An extract of the *BMJ* of 1892 (p 614) deplores the conditions of prisoners in police cells, reporting that many of the cells were "in a filthy and insanitary

state and altogether unfit for even animal habitation." A century later we still have prisoners being kept in police cells, and Stella Lowry describes how the mentally ill homeless in particular are likely to find themselves passing from the streets to custody to hospitals and then round again (p 594). But before despairing of solving these deepseated problems readers should look at the account of how the Flemish community of Geel has been caring effectively for the "outcasts of society" for 600 years (p 648).

Another longstanding problem is the bad conditions and poor training of young doctors in their pre-registration year, but British deans have now come up with a bold scheme for doctors to spend two years in preregistration training (p 625). The senior doctor could then look after the junior one; structured training could be introduced; and hours could be reduced to well under 72 a week. If at the same time as this scheme was introduced the medical course was shortened and salaries protected then everybody—except perhaps the Treasury—might be happy.