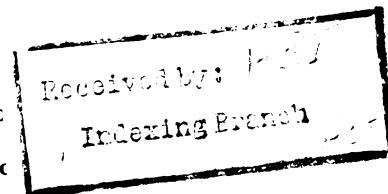




Editorials

129	The health of the nation John Gabbay
130	What future for the regions? Chris Ham
131	Performance related pay for hospital doctors Jonathan Boyce, Tim Morris
132	Campylobacter: epidemiological paradox John Cowden
133	Reducing mortality from meningococcal disease Norman Begg
134	Anhedonia: exclusion from the pleasure-dome Philip Snaith



News

135-140	The Health of the Nation · AIDS in American politics · NHS dental treatment · Leadership and doctors · Social fund · Political doctors' earnings in US · Sudden infant death · Advance directives · Winterton's deselection · Professional confidentiality · Health trilogy
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Papers

141	Meningococcal infections: reducing the case fatality rate by giving penicillin before admission to hospital Jeffrie R Strang, Edwin J Pugh
143	Early treatment with parenteral penicillin in meningococcal disease Keith Cartwright, Sheena Reilly, Diana White, James Stuart
147	Follow up of patients presenting with fatigue to an infectious diseases clinic Michael Sharpe, Keith Hawton, Valerie Seagroatt, Geoffrey Pasvol
152	Association between postpartum thyroid dysfunction and thyroid antibodies and depression Brian Harris, S Othman, J A Davies, G J Weppner, C J Richards, R G Newcombe, J H Lazarus, A B Parkes, R Hall, D I W Phillips
156	Contamination of skin and clothing of accident and emergency personnel Patricia Littlechild, Alasdair Macmillan, Maggie M White, David J Steedman
157	General practice and accident and emergency department care: does the patient know best? Jonathan S Nguyen-Van-Tam, Daryll M Baker
158	Changing site distribution of colorectal cancer F Kee, R H Wilson, R Gilliland, J M Sloan, B J Rowlands, R J Moorehead
159	Drug Points: Thrombocytopenia associated with lithium carbonate S Collings · Visual loss and optic atrophy associated with cyproterone acetate H Markus, M Polkey, M Harrison · Mesalazine induced lupus like syndrome M T Dent, S Ganapathy, C D Holdsworth, K C Channer

General Practice

160	Validating the SF-36 health survey questionnaire: new outcome measure for primary care J E Brazier, R Harper, N M B Jones, A O'Cathain, K J Thomas, T Usherwood, L Westlake
-----	---

Education & Debate

165	For Debate: Attitudes among physicians and health advisers in genitourinary medicine to tracing and notifying contacts of people with HIV infection R A Keenlyside, A S Hawkins, A M Johnson, M W Adler
169	ABC of Colorectal Diseases: Anal cancer D J Jones, R D James
171	Lesson of the Week: Venous air embolism associated with removal of central venous catheter Peter Mennim, Cormac F Coyle, John D Taylor
173	Current Issues in Cancer: Hodgkin's lymphoma—II: Treatment and delayed morbidity Patrice Carde

177-202	Obituary · Letters · Medicopolitical Digest · Soundings · Personal View · Medicine and the Media · Medicine and Books · Minerva · (in detail overleaf)
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CONTENTS pages 177-202

177 **Obituary** G E Scammell, R J Walsh, E H Hadfield, J Sayers, D B Jelliffe, B K Saha, H E Polak, N C Coombs, E S Nicholson, N O'Leary, B G Rigden

179 **Letters**

179 Potential endocervical pathogens before termination of pregnancy J C Konje and others; M Griffiths; A L Blackwell and others

179 Cervical smear testing for immunosuppressed women M A Ratcliffe

179 Heterosexual spread of HIV infection D Barlow and J Sherrard; A M Johnson

180 Treatment of allergy A Drake-Lee and S Stevenson

180 Cardiac arrest associated with flumazenil B R P Birch

181 Preschool screening for cryptorchidism S A Kaul and D P W Roberts

181 Lung cancer and radon D P B Miles

181 Symptoms after accelerated immunisation D Burgner and P Chetcuti

181 Monitoring ambulatory blood pressure in general practice C Silagy and others

182 Multiple sclerosis: diagnostic optimism J Braham

182 Pethidine in sickle cell crisis J F M Harrison and others

182 Maintenance treatment with methadone J Strang and M Farrell

182 Reformulated Omnopon D Ketley and T O'Carroll; D Robson

183 Visual problems in the elderly population A K McCallum and C Foy

183 Cataract in developing countries D Yorston and A Foster

183 Adrenaline in allergic emergencies M Gavalas and J Myers

183 Altitude induced illness D Murdoch

184 Long term problems after obstetric epidural anaesthesia A M Cohen; C MacArthur and others

184 Site of injection for vaccination M Henley

184 Sigmoidoscopy in general practice A Murphy

185 Lipoprotein(a) in cirrhosis G Utermann and H G Kraft

185 Use of Lucozade and glucagon by ambulance staff in hypoglycaemia L Yaxley and R H Greenwood

185 Patterns of hospital medical staffing M McKee

185 Induction of house officers M McBride; G Van Hasselt; B S Baker

186 Unnecessary hospitalisation in a psychiatric rehabilitation unit K Shotliff and others

186 Ernest Saunders: diagnostic dilemma P L G Gallwey

186 Patient's charter in outpatient services C G Kelly; M P Corlett

187 International debt, death squads, and children J Campbell; D Logie

187 "Gold standard" is an appropriate term E Versi

187 Dispensing doctors D Roberts

187 Medical abortion K J Thong and D T Baird; B Grant

188 Grieving women J Littlewood

188 Health and education in developing countries B Furnass

188 Compensation for cancelled operations A Yates

188 Polenta publications A J Pelosi

189 **Medicopolitical Digest** The Week in Nottingham

198 **Soundings** Why I hate sunbathing Julie Welch; Junior doctors' workload Trisha Greenhalgh

199 **Personal View** I'm still a doctor, aren't I? M D Harris

199 **Medicine and the Media** Fending off darkness from the rotating plinth Ian Robertson

200 **Medicine and Books**

200 Sam Shuster: *The Environmental Threat to the Skin* (Ed R Marks, G Plewig)

201 Ole Peter Grell: *Miasmas and Disease: Public Health and the Environment in the Pre-Industrial Age* (C M Cipolla)

201 Leone Ridsdale: *The Inner Apprentice* (R Neighbour)

202 **Minerva**

BMJ

Editor's
Choice

Poverty and gentility

The publication last week of *The Health of the Nation* may prove to be a major advance in improving the health of the English or simply an addition to dusty shelves. A news item summarises the report (p 135), and John Gabbay welcomes it in an editorial (p 129). Critics have concentrated on the fact that the report makes no mention of poverty, and the suspicion that the government is not serious about acting on poverty was strengthened when it tried to sneak out a damning report on the failure of the social fund while attention was focused on *The Health of the Nation*. The authors of the report on the social fund conclude that it is not meeting its objective of concentrating "attention and help on those applicants facing greatest difficulties in managing on their income" (p 138). If poverty worsens then it's unlikely that the English health strategy will be able to meet its targets.

Poverty and health strategies were both topics that came up at the annual representative meeting of the BMA in Nottingham, along with a host of other medicopolitical issues (p 189). The meeting now lasts four days, but it used to last a fortnight—with greater attention than now on the scientific and social side. An extract from the journal of 100 years ago describes a time when the BMA met before in Nottingham (p 172). In an excursion of unalloyed pleasure the party of the association travelled to Belvoir Castle. "His Grace the Duke of Rutland most hospitably entertained the company at luncheon in the noble dining room of the Castle"—without actually being present. Undeterred, the company drank his health with enthusiasm and then drove in perfect sunshine for tea with Sir William and Lady Welby. Such days are surely gone for ever, but poverty remains.