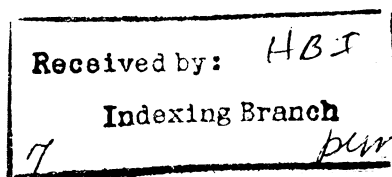


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Bread and butter medicine

The simple aim of the *BMJ* is to help its readers practise medicine better. As often as possible we try to give our readers useful information about clinical problems that they may well encounter the day they read the journal. This week's journal contains much bread and butter medicine that should be helpful.

About 1% of the British population suffers from venous leg ulcers, and one of our papers presents a simple system—based on the size and duration of the ulcer, the age of the patient, and whether or not deep veins are involved—for predicting the time to healing (p 1119). Another regular problem is a child with a fever. Should the child be unwrapped, warm sponged, or given paracetamol? A randomised study conducted in homes in Southampton suggests that paracetamol is the most effective treatment but warm sponging has an additive effect (p 1134). Our regular review deals with another common problem—urinary tract infection in adults (p 1137)—while our ABC looks at monitoring one of the most commonly prescribed drugs, digoxin (p 1149), and an editorial gives advice on treating the anaphylaxis that may be seen by any doctor (p 1107).

One kind of material that competes for space with

such ordinary medicine is that covering major political changes in health care. This week our series of responses to the Tomlinson report turns to primary care, and David Metcalfe argues that it will be a huge and expensive task to produce the quality of primary care that London needs (p 1141). In another article Brian Jarman and Nick Bosanquet examine the changes in primary care in London since the Acheson report 11 years ago and find that, although there has been some improvement, none of the recommendations specifically related to London have been implemented (p 1130).

Primary care in London suffered a loss last week through the tragic premature death of David Widgery, one of the capital's most visible general practitioners. David has written a column for us for a long time, and this week we publish what will sadly be his last (p 1164). It is a typical piece, in which he employs his deep historical knowledge of east London to mourn the passing of a tower block designed by the National Theatre architect, Dénys Lasdun, in Bethnal Green, an area identified by Charles Booth in the nineteenth century as particularly destitute. David notes that the competition for decent housing will be intensified.

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Editor's Choice