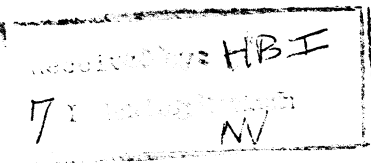


# BMJ

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## Editorials

- 1 **Save the normal foreskin**  
Andrew Gordon, Jack Collin
- 2 **A counsellor in every practice?**  
Mike Pringle, John Laverty
- 3 **Auditing *BMJ* decision making**  
Richard Smith
- 4 **Laser treatment of portwine stains**  
M J C Van Gemert, J A S Carruth, P G Shakespeare
- 5 **Treating persistent glue ear in children**  
Ruut A De Melker
- 6 **Academic medicine: plenty of room at the top**  
Richard Smith

## News

- 7-12 **Continuing medical education · NHS information strategy · Call for more doctors · Tony Blair still waiting · Trusts on trial · The Week**

## Papers

- 13 **Ethnic differences in mortality from sudden infant death syndrome in New Zealand**  
E A Mitchell, A W Stewart, R Scragg, R P K Ford, B J Taylor, D M O Becroft, J M D Thompson, I B Hassall, D M J Barry, E M Allen, A P Roberts
- 16 **Sudden infant death syndrome: links with infant care practices**  
M Gantley, D P Davies, A Murcott
- 20 **Investigation of inheritance of chronic inflammatory bowel diseases by complex segregation analysis**  
Marianne Orholm, Lennart Iselius, Thorkild I A Sørensen, Pia Munkholm, Ebbe Langholz, Vibeke Binder
- 24 **Initiation of hypertension in utero and its amplification throughout life**  
C M Law, M de Swiet, C Osmond, P M Fayers, D J P Barker, A M Cruddas, C H D Fall
- 28 **Why are children referred for circumcision?**  
Nigel Williams, Julian Chell, Leela Kapila

## General Practice

- 29 **Counsellors in English and Welsh general practices: their nature and distribution**  
Bonnie Sibbald, Julia Addington-Hall, Douglas Brenneman, Paul Freeling
- 33 **The Future of FHSAs: From FPC to FHSA to . . . health commission?**  
June Huntington

## Education & Debate

- 37 **Gestational diabetes: a non-entity?**  
R J Jarrett
- 39 **William Waldegrave on science policy**  
Richard Smith
- 42 **London after Tomlinson: The Tomlinson report and postgraduate medical education**  
J D Swales
- 44 **Countdown to Community Care: Moving ahead—community care in Gwent**  
Roger Robinson
- 48 **ABC of Monitoring Drug Therapy: Making the most of plasma drug concentration measurements**  
D J M Reynolds, J K Aronson
- 51 **Medical Education: Assessment of students**  
Stella Lowry
- 55 **Instructions to authors**

- 58-76 **Obituary · Letters · Medicopolitical Digest · Soundings · Personal View · Medicine and the Media · Medicine and Books · Minerva · (in detail overleaf)**

# CONTENTS *pages 58-76*

## 58 Obituary

A Bloom, D Keith, H A S van den Brenk, N Hamlin, D J Dodge, J M Brown, J F H Eagles, H E Harding, E S Reed

## 60 Letters

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 60 Pet birds and lung cancer<br>L Kohlmeier and others; A Gardiner and P Lee;<br>A Morabia; D Coggon; F H J Rampen          | 65 Driving and diabetes<br>S Keetarat                             |
| 61 Misuse of anabolic drugs<br>D J Williamson; R J Robinson and S White;<br>J S Bevan; K Shotliff and M Asante; J R Salaman | 66 Distinguishing inhalers to aid blind people<br>D C Hoyer       |
| 62 Tomlinson report<br>S Dische; P D Toon and others; A Livingstone   | 66 Medical education<br>P Cooles; G Roberts; B Olsburgh           |
| 63 Use of oral contraceptives by adolescents in Finland<br>C Fleming and others; A Rimpelä; J Sterland                      | 66 Dangers of review articles<br>E Søreide and P A Steen          |
| 63 Vaccination against <i>H influenzae</i> type b<br>E Booy and others  | 67 Audit and research<br>A Bull                                   |
| 63 Health and safety in general practice<br>G C Goodman and D Tivey   | 67 Italian NHS<br>E Terzian and G Tognoni                         |
| 64 Electronic communication<br>J Clarke and P J R Harkin; P J Branger; P R Hunter<br>and I Green                            | 67 Junior doctors' hours<br>M McKee and N Black; J Wight; E Field |
| 64 General practitioners' access to paediatric<br>cardiologists<br>D J Manning  | 68 Specialist training<br>G S Spathis                             |
| 65 Asking patients about their treatment<br>K Lawrence and others; J Shanks; T Sensky and<br>J Catalan                      | 68 Abortion in Poland<br>Z Szawarski                              |
|   | 68 Health economics in the NHS<br>M Jennings                      |
|   | 68 Interpreting fluorescein angiograms<br>B Harney                |

## 69 Medicopolitical Digest

BMA calls for ministerial meeting on NHS funding · GPs and consultants debate Tomlinson report · Health committee · Labour's community care campaign · £1m budget for mental health · Cash increases for RHAs

## 71 Soundings Informed consumers George Dunea; Toxic decisions Tony Smith

## 72 Personal View An industry out of control Richard Hackett

## 73 Medicine and the Media On giants' shoulders Thomas Cooter; Tipping the balance Tony Smith

## 74 Medicine and Books

- 74 Malcolm L Chiswick: *Effective Care of the Newborn Infant* (Ed J C Sinclair, M B Bracken)  
74 Stephen Scott: *Nobody Nowhere* (D Williams)  
75 S H Green: *Cerebral Palsy: The Child and Young Person* (Management of Disability Series) (Ed L Cogher, E Savage, M F Smith)

## 76 Minerva

### A place for qualitative research

Medical journals are increasingly dominated by research papers that use statistics, and most editors are convinced that this is an important development after centuries of medical anecdote. Nevertheless, there remains an important place for qualitative research, and a paper in this issue uses anthropological techniques to deepen our understanding of cot deaths (p 16). The authors have investigated why Bangladeshi families living in Cardiff have much lower rates of cot death than Welsh families, and they hypothesise that the reason may be that Bangladeshi mothers always keep their babies close to them. "I like to wake up in the night and see all my family around me," said one mother. Another paper from New Zealand examines why cot deaths are so much commoner among Maoris than non-Maoris and concludes that it is probably because recognised risk factors—like socioeconomic disadvantage—are commoner among Maoris (p 13). Oddly enough, in this survey sleeping with the baby increased the risk of cot death.

One of the editorial principles of the *BMJ* is that doctors in different countries have much to learn from each other by studying how common problems are

tackled. To this end we publish regular international round ups, and this week's one looks at how six different countries are tackling the problem of what to do about doctors who don't participate in continuing medical education (p 7). The countries use various mixtures of sticks and carrots.

A new series begins this week on the future of family health services authorities (p 33). June Huntington describes how these bodies are evolving from the reactive, largely administrative family practitioner committees into proactive bodies that want to manage primary care. The challenge will be for them to develop services without heavilyhandedly destroying their unique and local flavour.

Finally, we have a clutch of letters on the misuse of anabolic drugs (p 61). One letter reports a survey of almost 700 students showing that 4% of the men and 1% of the women had used anabolic steroids, while other letters report side effects including pulmonary emboli and rhabdomyolysis. A surgeon from Cardiff describes two male bodybuilders who wanted to have prominent breast tissue excised and notes that it is now common for such people to take tamoxifen as well as anabolic steroids.

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## Editor's Choice