

# BMJ

BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL NO 6883 VOLUME 306

INTERNATIONAL

<b>Editorials</b>	943	<b>Mitral valve prolapse</b> Martin A Alpert
	944	<b>What social workers need</b> Bill Utting
	945	<b>Short acting benzodiazepines</b> Michael C O'Donovan, Peter McGuffin
	946	<b>1966 revisited: bright new contract or brave old world?</b> Steve Iliffe
	947	<b>Where are we now with vaccines against AIDS?</b> G C Schild, E J Stott
<b>News</b>	949-952	<b>HIV and latency · Usefulness of zidovudine · Goldstein loses case · NHS and complementary medicine · Research and development · France's superministry · Families sue over children · Europe's drug companies</b>
<b>Papers</b>	953	<b>Cerebral herniation during bacterial meningitis in children</b> Gordon Rennick, Frank Shann, John de Campo
	956	<b>Oral contraception and risk of a cerebral thromboembolic attack: results of a case-control study</b> Øjvind Lidegaard
	963	<b>Effect of stress management on blood pressure in mild primary hypertension</b> Derek W Johnston, Anne Gold, John Kentish, Deana Smith, Patrick Vallance, Deepti Shah, Graham Leach, Brian Robinson
	967	<b>Rationale for stopping cervical screening in women over 50</b> W J Van Wijngaarden, I D Duncan
	971	<b>Antibody persistence after accelerated immunisation against <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b</b> Robert Booy, Sara Hodgson, Helen M Chapel, E Richard Moxon
	972	<b>Clinical coding: completeness and accuracy when doctors take it on</b> C Yeoh, H Davies
	973	<b>Drug points: Acute renal failure during interferon treatment</b> I H Fahal, N Murry, P Chu, G M Bell · <b>Hypersensitivity vasculitis related to nicoumalone</b> R Susano, A Garcia, A Altadill, J Ferro · <b>A new skin lesion associated with intravenous streptokinase</b> J E Smithson, C T C Kennedy, S Hughes
<b>General Practice</b>	974	<b>Immunisation against influenza among people aged over 65 living at home in Leicestershire during winter 1991-2</b> Karl G Nicholson
	977	<b>The Royal College of General Practitioners revisited</b> Brian D Keighley
<b>Education &amp; Debate</b>	979	<b>Is London overbedded?</b> Brian Jarman
	983	<b>Management guidelines in essential hypertension: report of the second working party of the British Hypertension Society</b> Peter Sever, Gareth Beevers, Christopher Bulpitt, Anthony Lever, Larry Ramsay, John Reid, John Swales
	987	<b>Is the money following the clients with learning disabilities?</b> Gyles R Glover, Jenifer Rohde, Richard D T Farmer
	990	<b>Countdown to Community Care: Helping disabled people—the user's view</b> Peter Swain
	993	<b>ABC of Sleep Disorders: Dreams and medical illness</b> Mark Katz, Colin M Shapiro
	996-1012	<b>Obituary · Letters · Soundings · Medicine and the Media · Personal View · Medicine and Books · Minerva · (in detail overleaf)</b>

# CONTENTS *pages 996-1012*

996 **Obituary** D P Burkitt, P D Samman, J Oldfield, W G MacGregor, M C Bell, J F Steel, R M Yule

---

## 998 Letters

998	Contamination of urine and faecal specimens L M Alexander and A Heaven	1002	Drug smuggler's delirium M L N G Malbrain and others; M J A Parr; A Seymour
998	Treating hypoglycaemia in general practice P M Round; R Parry	1002	Measuring outcome of perinatal care K L Dodd
998	Are modern British children too inactive? B Diahm and A Prentice	1003	Treating bed wetting B Donovan
999	Tobacco and health education J R Ashford and G Cumming; C Callum	1003	Fundholding A Fisher
999	Sudden infant death syndrome M Odent; E A Mitchell and D M O Becroft; E Banks and S M Gifford	1003	Deprivation payments A G Begg and others; J R Robertson and others
1000	Waiting for plastic surgery P J Mahaffey; D S Murray	1003	Use of Indian ethnic remedies R Bhopal; P G Blain and J Harrison
1000	Tomlinson and the BMA R R Jones and 16 others	1004	NHS rationing I Tomlinson
1001	Listening to patients T E Lankester; J N Thompson	1004	Productivity in clinical medicine N Goodwin
1001	Perfecting repair of vesicovaginal fistula J Mair	1005	Medicolegal fees P J E M Wilson; D E Pickersgill; M F Brewster
1001	Diabetic patients' eyes must be examined K Shotliff and L Herbert	1005	NHS spending T H Leigh
1001	Caring for children in hospital T D Edelsten and others	1005	Health insurance for doctors H Thelwall-Jones; D L Gullick; J Loakes
		1006	BUPA's change in practice R P Crick
		1006	Paracelsus P Skrabaneck; J H Baron

---

1007 **Soundings** Local history Duncan Curr; Virus kills primary care donkey George Dunea

---

## 1008 Medicine and the Media

Glowing mollusc lights the way Jeremy Cherfas; "One hell of a doctor" Trisha Greenhalgh

---

1009 **Personal view** My accident was my fault Jonathan P Wyatt

---

## 1010 Medicine and Books

1010 John Dickinson: *From the Greenwich Hulks to Old St Pancras: A History of Tropical Disease in London* (G C Cook)  
1010 J McKiernan: *Comprehensive Adolescent Health Care* (Ed S B Friedman, M Fisher, S K Schonberg)  
1011 Paul Ciclitira: *Celiac Disease* (Ed M N Marsh)

---

1012 **Minerva**

## The importance in medicine of not doing things

Good surgeons know how to operate, better surgeons know when to operate, and the best surgeons know when not to operate. This saying reflects the importance in medicine of resisting the human and therapeutic imperative always to do something. Not acting is often the right thing to do, and this week's journal contains several examples.

A group from Australia has looked back on 445 children with bacterial meningitis and discovered that 19 of them suffered cerebral herniation (p 953). Thirty one children died, and herniation had occurred in 14 of them. Herniation was something like 30 times more common in the 12 hours after lumbar puncture. Sometimes it will be right not to do a lumbar puncture. Other papers and articles show that it will often be right not to offer cervical screening to women over 50 (p 967), not to treat patients with hypertension with stress management (p 963), not to immunise elderly people against influenza (p 974), and not to give zidovudine to asymptomatic patients with HIV infection (p 949). There is so much not to do.

General practice in Britain seems to be at a crossroads, and both of its major institutions—the General Medical Services Committee (GMSC) and the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP)—are looking to the future. Ian Bogle, chairman of the GMSC, has produced a bold paper on the future of general practice, which Steve Iliffe applauds (p 946). The

college, meanwhile, is suffering from a financial crisis and falling membership and has just lost its chairman of council. Brian Keighley argues passionately on p 977 that the time has come for all general practitioners actively to support the college.

Duncan Curr begins a new *Soundings* column this week (p 1007). He is currently practising in Ingwavuma, South Africa, and he describes his experience of having to certify the age of what Circular No 38 calls a "Black Illiterate Old Person." Duncan replaces David Widgery, who died last year, and on p 1008 Trisha Greenhalgh reviews a television programme of David's work in the east end of London.

Finally, medicine has lost one of its most famous names with the death of Denis Burkitt. In the obituary on p 996 Andrew Ferguson draws on the piece that Burkitt published in the *BMJ* at the end of last year (21 November, p 1300). Burkitt argued that the most important ingredients for successful research may not be high intelligence, ample funding, and a sophisticated technical back up. There are other factors that are important, and Burkitt captured them in an epigram that he liked to write when signing copies of his books. "Attitudes are more important than abilities. Motives are more important than methods. Character is more important than cleverness. Perseverance is more important than power. And the heart takes precedence over the head."

# BMJ

Editor's  
Choice