

# bmj.com news roundup

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## Reported incidence of violence against NHS staff up by 13%

Reported incidents of violence and aggression directed at NHS staff rose 13% to 95 501 in 2001-2, although the numbers of serious physical assaults may be levelling out.

The figures, issued this week by the spending watchdog, the National Audit Office, are based on a survey of NHS acute care, mental health, and ambulance trusts in England.

But the picture is muddled by persistent under-reporting, estimated to be 39%, wide variations in reporting standards, and more than 20 different definitions of violence, says the report, which calculates the overall financial toll to be a minimum of £69m (\$109m; €102m) a year.

By the end of March 2002 only one in five trusts had managed to cut the rates of reported violence by as much as a fifth. This was a target set by the Department of Health for 2001 as part of its wider "zero tolerance" campaign, launched in October 1999.

Caroline White *London*

*A Safer Place to Work: Protecting NHS Hospital and Ambulance Staff from Violence and Aggression* is available from [www.nao.gov.uk](http://www.nao.gov.uk)

## "Safe havens" for unwanted babies could reduce infanticide

An estimated 85 newborn infants are killed or left to die in the United States each year, according to new research. More "safe havens," where unwanted babies could be left, would reduce the rate of infanticide, says the study, in *JAMA* (2003;289:1425-9).

Researchers from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, examined all reports in the state between 1985 and 2000 of liveborn babies who died aged



## Artists weave a tapestry of life

Lynn Eaton *London*

Clare O Hagan and Denise Wyllie, artists in residence at University College London, have joined forces with Professor John Hartley and his oncology team, which is funded by Cancer Research UK, to weave a tapestry inspired by the DNA molecule.

*Transformations in Science and Art*, which is 42 metres long and made of various traditional and contemporary media, is a "celebration of the inherent creativity of the scientists' work," say the artists.

The work is at the Institute of Child Health Gallery, 30 Guilford Street, London WC1N 1WH, every day from 9 am to 6 pm until 11 April and coincides with activities celebrating the 50th anniversary of the publication in *Nature* of Crick and Watson's paper describing the structure of DNA.

For more details see [www.transformations-in-science-and-art.org](http://www.transformations-in-science-and-art.org)

less than 5 days old. The 34 cases of infanticide they found was the equivalent of 2.1 infanticides per 100 000 births a year. Extrapolating from the figures, the researchers estimate that at least 85 newborns are killed or left to die each year in the United States.

Publicity about such safe havens could save lives, said the study's lead author, Dr Marcia Herman-Giddens of the North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute.

Janice Hopkins Tanne *New York*

## Anti-abortionist is convicted of murder of obstetrician

James Kopp, 48, was found guilty on 18 March of second degree murder in the shooting of Dr Barnett Slepian, a New York state obstetrician. Dr Slepian, 52,

was the last of seven people killed in attacks on abortion clinics and their staff from 1993 to 1998 (*BMJ* 1998;317:1174).

Mr Kopp admitted shooting Dr Slepian in his suburban home near Buffalo, New York, on 23 October 1998. Mr Kopp waived his right to a trial by jury and was convicted by Erie county judge Michael D'Amico in an unusual one day bench trial. His defence was that he only meant to wound the doctor to prevent him from carrying out abortions, but the prosecutor, assistant district attorney Joseph Marusak, said that shooting Dr Slepian was "an act of religious terrorism."

Mr Kopp, nicknamed Atomic Dog in anti-abortion circles for his persistent belief in violence to prevent abortions, still faces federal charges for violating the 1994 Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act.

He is also a suspect in the non-fatal shootings of four other abortion providers in Canada

and Rochester, New York, between 1994 and 1997.

Fred Charatan *Florida*

## Rates of lobular carcinoma increased markedly in the 1990s

A type of breast cancer known as invasive lobular carcinoma, which was once considered a fairly uncommon form of breast cancer, increased markedly in incidence during the 1990s in the United States.

Researchers looked at data on women aged 30 years or older drawn from nine cancer registries that participate in the surveillance, epidemiology, and end results (SEER) programme of the National Cancer Institute. The registries cover Atlanta, Detroit, San Francisco, Seattle, Connecticut, Hawaii, Iowa, New Mexico, and Utah.

From 1987 to 1999 cases of invasive lobular carcinoma jumped from 9.5% of all breast cancers to 15.6%, according to the analysis of more than 190 000 women with breast cancer (*JAMA* 2003;289:1421-4).

Scott Gottlieb *New York*

## High Court again quashes GMC judgment

The High Court last week quashed an "irrational" finding of serious professional misconduct by the General Medical Council against a professor of dermatology who had raised concerns about possible bias in an appointment to a consultant post.

Professor Pauline Dowd of the Royal Free and University College Medical School had been found guilty of misconduct and reprimanded in April 2001, along with Dr Jeffrey Cream, a consultant dermatologist at the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital in London (*BMJ* 2001;322:818).

Dr Cream had been due to sit on the selection panel for a new consultant post when