

bmj.com news roundup

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HIV infection rate among South African children found to be 5.6%

A new study on HIV infection and AIDS in South Africa has shown that children aged 2 to 14 years have an infection rate of 5.6%, leading to worries that South Africa's other epidemic—child abuse—is linked to the spread of HIV.

The Nelson Mandela/HSRC [Human Sciences Research Council] study of HIV and AIDS released last week draws for the first time on a representative sample of the local population including all ages and population groups, instead of the previous sample, which comprised pregnant women reporting to state antenatal clinics.

The new study, based on nearly 9000 participants and using anonymous saliva tests, has also shown that the white population is much more at risk from the virus than previously thought. Some 6.2% were found to carry the virus. Black Africans had the highest prevalence—18.4%.

Investigators are not sure why the prevalence among young children is so high. Although abuse of children is common, that is not thought to be the whole explanation because abuse is more common in girls than boys and yet the HIV rate was found to be similar between the sexes. The situation is likely to give rise to more research.

Pat Sidley *Johannesburg*

Jennifer Colman sues the GMC for £5.2m

The General Medical Council has been given a three week extension to file a defence to a £5.2m (\$8.2m; €8.1m) lawsuit made against it by a member for alleged negligence and breach of statutory duty.

The claim has been launched at the High Court by Dr Jennifer Colman, who was elected to the council in 2000.

Dr Colman, 58, claims she



Exhibition will act as hospital's memorial

An exhibition of patients and staff at All Saints Hospital, Eastbourne, which opened this week, will act as a record for the future after the hospital closes.

All Saints is a 105 bed rehabilitation hospital predominantly for older people that is due to close when the patient services can be relocated into other facilities locally.

The photograph above was taken by photographic artist Gina Glover, who was invited into the hospital over the spring and summer this year. The exhibition also includes pictures by Bob Mulvey, the hospital's general manager, and Steve Copeland, a craft electrician at the Eastbourne District General Hospital, both keen amateur photographers.

Mr Mulvey said: "I believe that this portrait is a legacy of the spirit of All Saints Hospital. It will be a reminder of that spirit when the hospital is closed and the patients have been reprovided for."

Annabel Ferriman *BMJ*

has been prevented from sitting on committees and subjected to a whispering campaign since she told the Charity Commission last year that fellow members had fiddled expenses. Some members, she alleged, had travelled second class and claimed for first class travel.

Last February the GMC set up an independent inquiry, led by George Staple QC, a leading City of London lawyer and former head of the Serious Fraud Office, into Dr Colman's role on the council. The inquiry is due to report in January.

Dr Colman, formerly known as Dr Colman-Archer, is claiming loss of earnings, pain and distress, injury to her feelings and reputation, and aggravated damages.

A spokesperson for the GMC said: "We will be confidently and energetically defending our claim."

Clare Dyer *legal correspondent, BMJ*

Oregon's governor apologises for forced sterilisations

In a historic gesture Oregon's governor, John Kitzhaber, has apologised to thousands of Oregonians who were forcibly sterilised while in the care of the state.

Between 1923 and 1981 Oregon practised eugenics and sterilised people who were mentally ill, had epilepsy, were criminals, or were homosexual. The state also sterilised residents of reform schools and girls who were considered promiscuous. A total of 2648 people were sterilised by castration, tubal ligation, hysterectomy, or vasectomy.

Oregon's eugenics bill was passed in 1913 and a Board of Eugenics was established in 1923. Later renamed the Board

of Social Protection, it stood until 1983.

In his speech Mr Kitzhaber said: "A great wrong was done to over 2600 Oregonians." Oregon was one of 33 US states to enact eugenics laws between 1900 and 1925. Mr Kitzhaber is the second governor to apologise for state endorsed forced sterilisation. Last year Governor Mark Warner of Virginia apologised.

Deborah Josefson *Nebraska*

Air pollution responsible for 600 000 premature deaths worldwide

Pea-souper smog may be a thing of the past in London, but health experts have warned that air pollution is a major burden on the developing world.

Dr Michal Krzyzanowski of the World Health Organization's Centre for Environment and Health told a conference to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the smog that enveloped London at the beginning of December 1952 that there were "striking similarities between developing countries and London 50 years ago."

The World Health Report 2002, *Reducing Risks, Promoting Healthy Life*, looked at the impact of urban air pollution on ill health.

Researchers studied air particles in 304 cities and found that air pollution globally was responsible for 1% of cardiovascular disease and 3% of cancers of the trachea, bronchus, and lung. This amounts to 600 000 premature deaths and 7.4 million disability adjusted life years (DALYs) worldwide every year.

Anne Gulland *London*

India announces plan to inform HIV infected blood donors

India's health ministry last week announced that blood donors found to be HIV positive would be told of their infection and