

Intravenous immunoglobulin increases risk of thrombotic events

S G Baxter Healthcare Corporation and the American Red Cross have issued joint warnings of a possible link between intravenous immunoglobulin and serious thrombotic events that could lead to chest pain, congestive heart failure, and myocardial infarctions in certain patients.

The two organisations have posted their warning on the website of the US Food and Drug Administration (www.fda.gov/medwatch/SAFETY/2002/safety02.htm#igiv). Baxter has also sent a warning letter to physicians.

Intravenous immunoglobulin consists of antibodies derived from pooled human plasma, which are stabilised with sugars or proteins. The product helps to fight infection in those with weakened immune systems and is commonly used in patients with HIV, hepatitis C, a bone marrow transplant, certain leukaemias, and neurological diseases such as Guillain-Barré syndrome.

Although the exact cause of the clot related problems is unknown, rapid infusion of intravenous immunoglobulin is considered a "possible risk factor," according to Baxter (which makes one product, Gammagard S/D) and the Red Cross (which distributes a second, Polygam S/D).

Scott Gottlieb *New York*

One in 12 children dies before age 5 from preventable disease

A 12 year study on the world's children to be presented at a United Nations conference concluded that child mortality is still high despite a decade of unprecedented economic growth.

The study found that while child mortality fell by 11%, from 93 to 83 deaths per 1000 live births during the 1990s–1 in every 12 children dies before age 5 from preventable diseases.

The 102 page study—an



Children's hospital in Cardiff could drain resources from rest of Wales

Consultant paediatricians in Swansea have urged the Welsh Assembly to investigate funding of children's health services in Wales.

The paediatricians have also warned that a new children's hospital for Wales in Cardiff, for which former England cricketer Ian Botham and actress Catherine Zeta Jones (pictured) have been raising funds, would drain resources from other parts of the principality.

Their concerns are that the new hospital will be seen, and treated as, a national hospital for children at the expense of other areas.

"We are not against Cardiff having a new hospital to unite paediatric services for Cardiff on one site, but we are concerned that it is going to be called the children's hospital for Wales, which will leave people—and politicians—thinking that other areas don't need resources for children's services," says Dr Dewi Evans, consultant paediatrician at Singleton Hospital, Swansea. "A national hospital would drain resources from other areas of Wales."

He and his colleagues are worried too about existing funding for paediatric services in Swansea.

Roger Dobson *Abergavenny*

update of a 1990 report covering child health, education, nutrition, and protection in nearly 150 countries—concluded that healthy and educated children are vital to economic development and urged governments to invest more in future generations.

The report was compiled for the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children, to be held next week in New York and at which more than 70 world leaders and 170 national delegations are due to set targets on the survival, development, and protection of young people.

Fiona Fleck *Geneva*

We the Children: Meeting the Promises of the World Summit for Children is accessible on the Unicef website (www.unicef.org).

India's health levels a mix of success and embarrassment, says report

A report on improvements in life expectancy and standards of health in India gives a mixed picture of the country's achievements in recent years.

"India's post-independence achievement in longevity and health of the population is a story of some successes and some embarrassments—perhaps in equal measures," says the first ever *National Human Development Report*, released last week by the Planning Commission.

The human development

index, comprising eight key indicators—including incidence of poverty, access to safe drinking water, and infant mortality—improved by 26% nationally during the 1980s and by another 24% in the 1990s, says the report. But at the state level "there are wide disparities in the level of human development."

In the 1980s Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Orissa had a human development index half that of southern Kerala. But only Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan managed to improve development in the 1990s.

Sanjay Kumar *New Delhi*

The *National Human Development Report 2001* is available at <http://planningcommission.nic.in/>

Nigeria recommends jail terms to eradicate female genital mutilation

The Nigerian legislature is set to pass a law banning female genital mutilation and imposing a two year jail term for offenders.

The bill, which is currently being considered by the Senate, was unanimously passed by Nigeria's lower house, the House of Representatives, last year. The Senate is expected to conclude its deliberations on the bill in May, after which it will be sent to President Olusegun Obasanjo for his assent.

The first clause of the Circumcision of Girls and Women (Prohibition) Bill says: "No person shall circumcise a girl or woman and no person shall abet or aid the circumcision of any girl or woman."

Already, some activists have complained that the two year imprisonment prescribed by the new law is not strict enough, especially because it allows for an option of a fine of \$100 (£69; €111) or the imposition of both a fine and incarceration. Some observers say, however, that the new law is a long sought victory in the crusade to abolish female genital mutilation in Nigeria.

Abiodun Raufu *Lagos*