

bmj.com news roundup

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NHS is urged to become more energy conscious

The NHS will have to become “greener” and more conscious of its energy use to avert a potential financial crisis, a meeting of senior health service managers heard last week.

The warning came as Caroline Flint, the public health minister, launched detailed advice on how NHS organisations could combat waste and environmental damage. She said it was “vital that the NHS, as Britain’s—and Europe’s—biggest employer, sets an example on sustainable development.”

Jonathon Porritt, the chairman of the Sustainable Development Commission, told the launch that it was also vital for the NHS to cut its use of energy and shave 30% off fuel bills.

“If they don’t, and oil prices go from \$60 to \$100 a barrel by the end of the decade, it would be terrible for unprepared parts of the NHS,” he said.

The commission has teamed up with the Department of Health to launch the new “self assessment model” to help every NHS organisation boost its efficiency. Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Trust, one of five trusts piloting the model, said it was able to save £300 000 in three years by using its printers more economically.

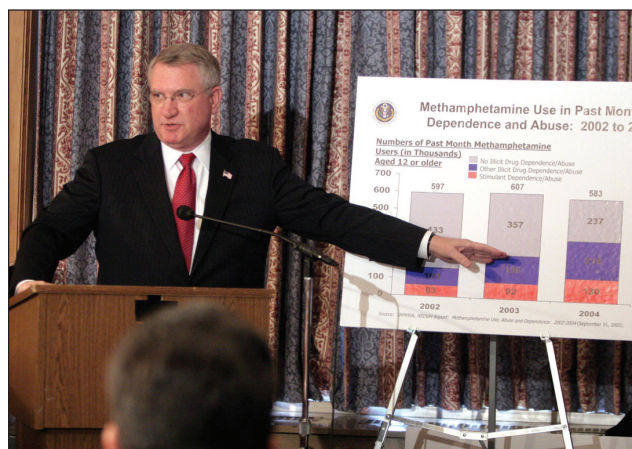
Michael Day *London*

More information can be found at www.corporatecitizen.nhs.uk

Woman takes Polish government to court over denial of abortion

A Polish woman who was left partially blind after doctors refused to terminate a pregnancy that eye experts had said might worsen her eyesight has taken her case to the European Court of Human Rights.

Alicja Tysiac, a mother aged 35 from Warsaw, claims that her human rights were violated when she was denied an abor-



Methamphetamine epidemic hits middle America

Methamphetamine misuse, involving cooking up the drug in kitchens and makeshift laboratories, is overwhelming hospitals and police departments in the United States, particularly in small towns in rural parts of the West and Midwest.

A new report into the epidemic from the National Association of Counties, which represents county governments, showed that methamphetamine was responsible for more emergency department visits than any other drug and that the need for treatment programmes was growing dramatically. The report, which was based on surveys from 200 hospital emergency room officials in 39 states, said side effects of methamphetamine use include convulsions, dangerously high body temperature, strokes, cardiac arrhythmias, heart attacks, and stomach cramps.

John Walters, director of the White House’s Office of National Drug Control Policy (above), addressed US senators last month about the problems of methamphetamine.

Janice Hopkins Tanne *New York*

The report and surveys are available at www.naco.org/Template.cfm?Section=Meth_Action_Clearinghouse.

tion despite the obvious risks to her health.

Ms Tysiac, who has severe myopia, was told by three specialist ophthalmologists that her eyesight would be at serious risk when she became pregnant in 2000.

Under abortion laws in Poland, women require a medical certificate for a pregnancy to be terminated on grounds of risk to health. However, the head of the gynaecology and obstetrics department at a Warsaw hospital refused to accept a certificate issued by Ms Tysiac’s family doctor. She was forced to continue with her pregnancy, and her eyesight deteriorated considerably as a result of a retinal haemorrhage. She cannot see objects more than 1.5 m away.

A verdict is not expected for several months.

Bojan Pancevski *Warsaw*

Doctor reignites euthanasia row in Belgium after mercy killing

State prosecutors in Belgium opened an inquiry last week after a doctor ended the life of an 87 year old woman who had dementia.

The inquiry started after the doctor, Marc Cosyns, published an article in the medical magazine *Huisarts* (“*The Family Doctor*,” 9 Feb, 6-7) stating that he had ended the life of Suzanne Roegijs in January.

The doctor, who is a GP as well as a lecturer in end of life care at the University of Ghent, told the *BMJ* that he wanted to reignite the debate about extending euthanasia to people with dementia and to children.

Belgium legalised euthanasia in 2002 (*BMJ* 2002;325:854). However, the current law requires patients to be in full possession of their mental powers before they can consent to euthanasia.

Dr Cosyns said that Mrs Roegijs had asked in a “lucid” moment to be allowed to die, and that he had given her a drink containing barbiturates.

Jane Burgermeister *Vienna*

Scientist is cleared of misconduct but is accused of misbehaviour

The University of Pittsburgh has cleared Gerald Schatten, director of its department of obstetrics, gynaecology, and reproductive sciences, of any scientific misconduct in his collaboration with the disgraced Korean stem cell researcher Hwang Woo-suk. The university’s research integrity panel investigated Dr Schatten’s role in a paper published in *Science* (2005;308:1777-83), which was one of two withdrawn by the journal in January after revelations that they were based on falsified data.

Although the panel concluded that Dr Schatten was not involved in the falsification of data and that he was unaware of the misconduct that led to Professor Hwang’s resignation from Seoul National University, it accused him of shirking his responsibilities as coauthor of the paper.

Its criticism of Dr Schatten centred on why he did not take greater steps to ensure the veracity of the data supporting the paper’s claims. During the investigation he also sought to distance himself from Dr Hwang.

“This is in sharp contrast to his full participation in the media spotlight following publication of the paper,” the panel wrote.

The actions of Dr Schatten, who accepted honorariums from Professor Hwang totalling \$40 000 (£23 000; €33 700), was not research misconduct but “research misbehaviour,” the panel said.

Jane Parry *Hong Kong*