

An Occasional Medical Newsletter from The Blood Care Foundation

Dear Member,

From personal experience I know that weight gain increases your blood pressure. All my life I have suffered from hypotension, fainting in such embarrassing places as the Officers' Mess during the visit of the Ruler of Bahrain and in St Paul's Cathedral during a Remembrance Day service. Imagine my chagrin 2 years ago when, on a routine check by my GP, I was told I was hypertensive. No wonder, I was over 112kg and my B.P. was 170/120. Back to a reasonable 85kg and a B.P. of 95/50, I am glad that a recent study has validated my personal experience. Welcome to 2001 and my 29th Newsletter.

Weight Loss and Reduction in Blood Pressure

A 3-year survey of overweight people in the USA found that for every 2lbs (0.88kg) in weight reduction, their blood pressure fell by 1.4mmHg. However, in spite of counselling by dieticians, only 13% of the participants managed to maintain their weight loss. (*Ann.Int.Med.* 2001;**134**:1-11)

Leishmaniasis in the USA

There are over 11,000 working foxhounds in the USA and one in eight have antibodies to *Leishmania infantum* one of the causative organisms of visceral leishmaniasis in humans, which was thought to be virtually absent from the USA. The problem came to light when numerous hounds in a pack in New York state died last year. It is probable that sandflies are the vector and there are genuine fears that the disease could now become endemic. (*Science.* 2000;**290**:1881-3)

Exposure of Healthcare Workers to Bloodborne Viruses

An analysis of the exposure data reported between July 1997 and June 2000 showed that 813 workers had been exposed to blood borne viruses during this period. 45% of those exposed were nurses or midwives and 38% doctors. The commonest injury (70%) was percutaneous due to a needle stick. One HIV transmission occurred, in spite of post-exposure prophylaxis, from the 293 exposures but no hepatitis C transmissions following 462 exposures. Previous hepatitis B immunisation proved effective in preventing transmission in the 151 exposures. (*BMJ.* 2001;**322**:397-8)

Manual of Cancer Standards

The National Cancer Standards have recently been published. They cover patient information, access to specialist staff, diagnostic and oncology services, palliative care, communication and overall organisation. The standards are available at www.doh.gov.uk/cancer or from Justine Palin on +44(0)207-960-5884 or justine.palin@gstt.sthames.nhs.uk.

Treatment of Hepatitis C

It is estimated that over 200,000 people in the UK have undiagnosed hepatitis C. The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) has recently published its approval for combination therapy (? Interferon + ribavirin) in previously untreated cases. The full appraisal is available on www.nice.org.uk or from Jane Verity on +44-(0)207-766-9191 or jane.verity@doh.gsi.gov.uk.

Mouthwash may Treat Malaria

Researchers in India have discovered that the chemical triclosan, which is a common ingredient in mouthwashes and deodorants, will clear malarial parasites from mice. Triclosan inhibits the synthesis of FabI, a critical enzyme in the fatty acid metabolic pathway of malarial parasites. (*Nature Medicine*. 2001;**7**:167-72)

Insecticide Treated Nets Prevent Malaria

The results of a trial conducted among a random sample of children under 2 years in Tanzania in 1997/8 showed that the distribution of insecticide treated mosquito nets had a protective effect of 62% and reduced anaemia by 50% during the study period. (*BMJ*. 2001;**322**:270-3)

Female Sterilisation and Menstrual Problems

It has long been taught that tubal ligation causes menstrual problems later in life. This myth has now been well and truly debunked by a team from Atlanta. They followed up 1,000 women for 5 years. Tubal sterilisation did not increase the risk of subsequent menstrual disorders. In fact, although the numbers did not reach statistical significance, it appeared that women, whose husbands had had a vasectomy, had more menstrual irregularities. (*New Engl.J.Med.* 2000;**343**:1681-7)

Increase in HIV rates in USA and UK

The annual rate of new HIV infections in San Francisco has doubled over the past 4 years from 1.04% in 1997 to 2.2% in 2001. This follows a 4 year period when the infection rate was stable and Dr Willi McFarlane, chief of San Francisco seroepidemiology unit, recently said "The weight of evidence now suggests that this is a rebound epidemic." The number of new cases in UK in 2000 (2868) was the highest since 1985 (3222) and could rise above that figure when all reports have been analysed. For the second year running more infections were acquired through heterosexual intercourse than through homosexual sex. (*BMJ*. 2001;**322**:260)

Cholera

The Department of Health in South Africa has recently reported that there have been 69,761 cases of cholera, with 139 deaths, in KwaZulu Natal since the current outbreak started in August 2000.

Abdominal Obesity

Abdominal fat is the most dangerous. Males with a waist circumference >90cms and a fasting triglyceride concentration > 2mmol/l are 10 times more likely to suffer from atherogenic myocardial disease than those with a waist circumference < 90cms. (*BMJ*. 200;**322**:687-8 & 716-20)

Resistin

A new hormone, which links obesity to type 2 diabetes, has been discovered and named resistin (for "resistance to insulin"). As the number of fat cells increase, so the amount of resistin secreted is increased, which in turn modifies the body's sensitivity to insulin. (*Nature* 2001;**409**:307-12)

Monday, 08 December 2003

Michael JG Thomas
MA, MB, FRCP (Edin), DTM&H
Clinical Director