

## **An Occasional Medical *Newsletter* from The Blood Care Foundation**

Dear Member,

Welcome to Newsletter No 38. In Newsletter No 36 I mentioned an excellent supplement to the Journal of Travel Medicine, which was devoted to traveller's diarrhoea. I realise that this may be a journal to which many of you do not have access, but I am sure you all can access the Consumers' Association publication, Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin. In the May 2002 number, there is an excellent review on the avoidance and treatment of traveller's diarrhoea and it also mentions that you can share this information with your patients/clients as the next "*Treatment Notes*" will be on this topic. Further information can be obtained by e-mail to [dtb@which.net](mailto:dtb@which.net) or from their website at [www.which.net/health/dtb/main.html](http://www.which.net/health/dtb/main.html).

### **Rat Rabies.**

Although rats have been thought to become rabid, as they are rarely caught this is seldom proved. A patient was recently attacked "fiercely" by a large rat whilst sleeping in his home, in Phetchabun Province, Thailand, under a mosquito net. Although he sustained numerous bites to his hand, he managed to capture the rat and examination proved that it was carrying Asian dog rabies. There were 69 deaths from rabies in Thailand in 1999 and 51 in 2000. It is thought that rats become infected after being bitten by a dog or cat, the commonest carriers of rabies, or from eating cat, dog or bat carrion. Unusual behaviour by rats, such as undue aggressiveness or absence of fear, should be viewed as warning signs and the bite victim treated as with any other mammal bite. (*J.Trav.Med.* 2002;**9**:106-7)

### **Acute Mountain Sickness.**

A recent review suggests that neck surgery or neck irradiation may make people more likely to suffer acute mountain sickness. It is suggested that neck surgery or irradiation may interfere with the normal response by the chemoreceptors in the carotid body, which is the cornerstone of acclimatisation to high altitude. In addition the physiological changes that occur at high altitude can cause Grand mal seizures in previously healthy people. (*J.Trav.Med.* 2002;**9**:94-96 and 105)

### **A New Group of anti-HIV Drugs.**

Eradication of HIV has proved impossible with the currently available drugs, reverse transcriptase inhibitors and protease inhibitors. A new range of drugs are now in Phase III trials, which prevent HIV fusing with the CD4<sup>+</sup> cell and transferring the viral RNA, thus infecting the cell. The actual process of fusion and entry between HIV and the CD4<sup>+</sup> cell is complicated and not yet fully understood, but enough is known to allow a number of inhibitor drugs to have been developed. The most advanced and currently most successful is T-20 which mimics part of the gp41 complex on the membrane of HIV and is integrated into the viral wall thereby preventing the gp41/gp120 complex, sometimes known as the gp160 spike, from opening the wall of the CD4<sup>+</sup> cell and thus aborting fusion. (*The PRN Notebook.* 2002;**7**(1):16-22)

### **Travelling with Infants and Children.**

Travelling with young people is always difficult and this no more so than when a family is moving to an expatriate posting. Stauffer and Kamat have prepared an excellent guide, which covers immunisations, travel preparation and preventive health advice. (*J.Trav.Med.* 2001;8:254-9 and 2002;9:82-90)

### **Road Traffic Accidents.**

A recent edition of the *British Medical Journal* was virtually entirely devoted to traffic problems. Among the mind-jolting facts that emerged were that more people are killed on the roads than die of malaria, 85% of traffic accidents deaths occur in developing countries, there are over 25,000 per annum in Thailand, and that even in a developed country one has a one in a hundred chance of being killed in a traffic accident. This edition explores the reasons why we accept a daily figure of 3,000 deaths and 30,000 serious injuries from traffic accidents around the world. This is the equivalent of a daily attack on the World Trade Centre. As far as the UK is concerned, our annual traffic toll is the equivalent of a Lockerbie air crash happening every 4 weeks or a Paddington rail disaster every other day. However, there is also some good news. Traffic laws, such as speed control measures and traffic calming, properly enforced are the most efficient method of accident reduction, more safety measures, such as pop-up car bonnets, are being introduced to reduce the severity of injuries and adult seat belts are effective in school age children. (*BMJ.* 2002;32411 May: 1107-65)

### **Solar Keratoses.**

Solar keratoses develop in people whose skin has been repeatedly exposed to the sun. Prevalence is higher in men than in women, in people with fair rather than dark skin and increases with age. The incidence in UK is about 21% in people aged 40 rising to over 52% in those aged 70 and over. Estimates of malignant transformation into squamous cell carcinoma vary greatly with an upper limit of about 15%. Preventative strategies include the use of high factor sunscreens, reduction in dietary fat to around 20% of total calorie intake, and taking vitamin A and other retinoids. (*Drugs and Therapeutics Bulletin.* 2002;40(5):33-35)

### **Hazards of Intravenous Immunoglobulin.**

Intravenous immunoglobulin is used to fight infections in patients suffering from a number of conditions including HIV, hepatitis C, certain leukaemias and neurological diseases such as the Guillain-Barré syndrome. Recently both the Baxter Healthcare Corporation and the American Red Cross have issued warnings of a link between the rapid infusion of intravenous immunoglobulin and serious thrombotic events that could lead to heart failure or myocardial infarction. (<http://www.fda.gov/medwatch/SAFETY/2002/safety02.htm#igiv>)

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