Reducing cardiac deaths; glucose in stroke; and decision making in neonatal care

Defibrillators cut cardiac deaths

Implantable defibrillators are more effective than antiarrhythmics in preventing death from ventricular fibrillation and ventricular tachycardia. In a multicentre, American study, 1,016 patients were randomised to receive either the defibrillator or antiarrhythmics. After a year of treatment there was almost 38% fewer deaths in the defibrillator group compared with those on drug treatment. Although this gap had narrowed after two and three years, there was still a 25% difference in death rates.

The trial was stopped 18 months early because of the clear superiority of defibrillators.


Role of glucose in stroke mortality

Glucose concentration above 8mmol/litre after acute stroke predicts a poor prognosis and arguably should be treated actively, researchers state. A study involving 750 non-diabetic patients with confirmed stroke was undertaken. Analysis of data found increased age (relative hazard 1.36 per decade), haemorrhagic stroke (relative hazard 1.67), time to resolution of symptoms after acute stroke? Results of a long term follow up study. British Medical Journal. 314, 1303-1306.

Decision making in neonatal care

Only a tiny minority of neonatal nurses and doctors feel that they have been adequately prepared for making decisions about withdrawing or withholding treatment.

Researchers undertook in-depth interviews with 119 neonatal nurses and 57 doctors from six units. The majority thought that such decisions should be a team effort but many of the nurses felt their contribution was undervalued, a view which was reflected in data from the consultants. However, nurses who had misgivings about decisions rarely voiced these to the consultant. Asked about who should decide, more senior nurses and doctors tended to think the responsibility should rest with doctors while more junior staff defended parents’ right to choose. There was enormous variation in practice between units about the mechanics of treatment withdrawal.


Start good health with HealthStart

June 6 Health workers across the North West will begin a bid to lead healthier lives with mass participation in the HealthStart Festival which begins today and lasts for six weeks. The festival coincides with the British Heart Foundation’s (BHF) British Heart Week, and BHF is HealthStart’s official charity. Members of the public can participate in regional events including the Liverpool-Chester-Liverpool Bike Ride on July 6 and the North West Walks for Health. For more information ring 0800 665544.

Walk on the wild side

June 15-24 Anyone who is concerned about asthma and fancies a ‘Midsummer Stroll’ to raise over £100,000 for asthma research should contact Lorna Smith at the National Asthma Campaign on 0171 226 2260 ext 346 for a free Midsummer Stroll pack. The charity would like to see this new walking event taking place all over the UK, and is hoping every town and city will play its part.

Meeting of the world’s nurses

June 15-20 Nurses from all over the world will be meeting at the 21st Quadrennial Congress of the International Council of Nurses in Vancouver, Canada. Congress is set to debate a wealth of issues including international partnerships in nursing education and the effect of skill mix on patient outcomes. Any last minute registrants can contact Brian French at RCN Conference Unit at RCN Headquarters in London on 0171 409 3333.

A safer environment for children

June 23-29 According to a recent survey by the Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT), nearly half of parents worried more about accidents than any other health hazard. The research also found that parents approve of awareness raising weeks. Child Safety Week will help encourage parents, carers and children to take action to prevent accidents. For a resource pack, price £5.50 incl. p&p, write to CAPT, 18-20 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Tel: 0171 608 3828. Cheques should be made payable to Child Safety Services.