

Organizing education for health care

Sir,

The author of the editorial on organization of education for health care in the new NHS (Vol 64(1), 2003, p. 6) has captured the breathtaking array of policy change affecting professional education in the NHS. The days where each profession could run to their hermetically sealed silos are about to be fundamentally challenged. There will always be a place for unidisciplinary learning, but at postgraduate levels we are witnessing a greater emphasis on shared learning across professions.

The other key change lies in greater external influence over and scrutiny of educational activities in the NHS. Ensuring a sound link between the educational needs of practitioners and the needs of the service will be a clear policy goal. The change agenda challenges education providers, service managers, workforce confederations and senior professionals to think in a new way about continuous professional development and performance appraisal. If we get this right the prize could be a better prepared NHS professional workforce, far better equipped to work in well-functioning teams.

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Orthopaedic care in haemophilia

Sir,

The important review by Mr Ribbens (Vol 64(2), 2003, p. 68) on orthopaedic aspects of haemophilia is very timely, as the funding and organization of treatment for rare disorders is being considered at national level at a time when funding of health care is also being devolved to primary care trusts with very broad responsibilities.

The central message that haemophilia care is best provided

through multidisciplinary teams in centres of expertise designated as 'comprehensive care centres' is an important one. Management of this rare disorder can be complex, and specialist haematological support is vital to any surgeon taking on these patients.

Fortunately, the prospects for the younger generation of patients with haemophilia has changed dramatically in recent years. They are now often treated with infusions of coagulation factor concentrates on a prophylactic basis, two or three times a week, to reduce or even suppress the development of spontaneous joint bleeds. In the short term, this leads to fewer absences from school and work, and in the longer term facilitates social integration and minimizes the risk of disability.

Furthermore, recombinant products are becoming more widely used, offering freedom from the risk of infection with such viruses as hepatitis and human immunodeficiency virus which have been such a scourge in the past. It must, however, be acknowledged that haemophilia is an expensive disorder to treat and studies evaluating long-term outcomes and cost-effectiveness are required. While the prognosis for patients in developed countries is now very good, the World Federation of Haemophilia estimates that some two thirds of patients with haemophilia around the world still receive no treatment at all.

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Stroke website for international collaboration

Sir,

The incidence of non-communicable diseases is increasing in many developing countries and global efforts to tackle the problem are required. There is a significant lack of current informa-

tion regarding the epidemiology, prevention, treatment and management of stroke in many developing countries. The availability of the Internet in many communities makes e-mail and web-based communications an attractive and cheap method of sharing valuable stroke information across continents.

As a result, a new website on stroke (www.stroke-information.net) has been developed which is dedicated to improving medical information and fostering stroke information in developed and developing countries. It is hoped this will be the beginning of concerted efforts to improve information delivery and sensitization of the medical fraternity towards stroke.

The site includes basic information, case reports and images related to stroke. Information is focused specifically on stroke subtypes: ischaemic stroke, intracerebral haematoma and subarachnoid haemorrhage. The site includes comprehensive reviews of published papers, stroke guidelines and essays on 'How I do it' by experts. There are links to all major stroke journals, stroke associations, support groups and businesses.

The intention of this site is to have collaboration between and the cooperation and contributions of doctors, nurses and members of allied professions. It is envisaged that the site will facilitate exchanges of medical information among users.

This site is being developed by doctors to provide a dynamic response to the lack of information for physicians and researchers in some countries. It is hoped that the site will facilitate cooperation in joint research projects and bilateral education. We hope to stimulate mutually beneficial associations between stroke physicians in different parts of the world and improve access to research papers in developing countries. It is envisaged that mirror sites will be established which are customized for each local area and written in different languages for wider appeal.

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