

News in Brief

Preventing poisoning

In England and Wales the number of children below 10, dying of poisoning has fallen by 82% in the last 32 years. What has made the difference? One key factor has been education against possible household risks of accidental drug ingestion. Technological advances like child proof bottles, blister packs, changes in prescribing policies with trends towards less toxic drugs have all contributed their bit. While aspirin poisoning is almost non-existent, opioids and opiates are leading causes in Britain. And though accidental drug overdose has decreased, homicides are on the rise. The report was published online (ahead of print publication) on 28 July in *Forensic Science International* (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.forsciint.2004.04.083>). What do we need to learn in India? Meticulous reporting. Rigorous analysis of data. Deciding what simple steps can prevent major mishaps. And strict enforcement of basic safety rules. These will go a long way in reducing preventable deaths in India.

New drug for tuberculosis: In 1963 when Rifampicin was developed for tuberculosis it revolutionized anti-tubercular therapy. After 40 years a new molecule against tuberculosis is just emerging. This drug promises to bring down duration of treatment from 6 months to 2 months. This offspring of Private and Public Sector enterprise is part of the new Millennium Indian Technology Leadership

Initiative (NMITLI) launched by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research. The pharmaceutical company Lupin with 4 partners - Central Drug Research Institute, National Chemical Laboratory, Indian Institute of Chemical Technology and University of Hyderabad have together discovered this new molecule. Regulatory studies have been completed and once it is cleared by Drugs Controller General of India it will undergo phase I, II and III trials in humans. It is expected to take 4-5 years before it hits the markets (*The Economic Times*, 10 September, 2004).

Tailor made in Italy: An Italian child with Thalassaemia Major recently underwent cord blood stem cell transplant from his newborn twin brothers. What was remarkable was that the twins had been conceived by in vitro fertilization after pre-implantation genetic diagnosis. That meant that the implanted embryos were not only thalassaemia free but were also tissue matched to the patient. One month after the stem cell transplant, the boy is doing well without graft versus host disease. However the case has kicked off a major debate in the country. This was because since preimplantation genetics is not legal in Italy the parents had traveled to Turkey for the initial procedure (*BMJ* 2004; 329: 643).

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