



NEWS

In brief

UK government plans to cap legal fees in clinical negligence claims: The UK government is proposing to fix legal costs for claimants' lawyers in cases of claims up to £100 000 (€140 000; \$160 000) so that the lawyer's fee reflects a percentage of the patient's compensation. Currently there is no limit on legal fees that can be charged, meaning that lawyers can be paid far more than the patient gets in compensation. The plan, which the government says will save the NHS up to £80m a year, has been welcomed by the Medical and Dental Defence Union of Scotland and the Medical Defence Union.

FDA won't restrict sales of contraceptive implant: The US Food and Drug Administration will not move to restrict sales of the Essure contraceptive implant, after two reviews of the maker Bayer's postmarket surveillance data found no conclusive evidence of complications beyond those already mentioned in the patient information booklet. But in response to a continuing high volume of complaints from patients the FDA's obstetrics and gynaecology devices panel will hold a meeting to review the device's "safety and efficacy" on 24 September, at which members of the public may raise concerns.

More people in England now die at home: Latest figures on care at the end of life from Public Health England show that the proportion of people dying at home or in care homes rose from 35% (166 749) in 2004 to 44% (207 764) in 2013.¹ The number of people dying in hospital fell by 50 000 over the same period, accounting for less than half of all deaths (227 748) in 2013.

Monitor sets up team to tackle high spending on agency staff: The regulator Monitor has set up a team of experts to reduce the amount of money the NHS in England spends on agency staff. Its figures show that spending on temporary staff rose by 29% to £2.4bn in 2013-14 and that NHS foundation trusts spent £1.8bn, more than double what they had planned. The team will run a three month trial at three foundation trusts to provide trusts with support in action planning and a diagnostic tool to identify weaknesses in how trusts manage staff. It also plans a series of workshops designed to spread good practice.

Cancer Research UK invests £15m in major new centres: The charity Cancer Research UK has launched its first major new research centres in Oxford, Manchester, and Cambridge. Each centre will receive £5m to boost work in personalised cancer medicine and early research into detection. The centres will act as research hubs for Cancer Research UK, drawing together expertise, encouraging collaborative research, and bridging the gap between innovative laboratory work and benefits for patients.

WMA appeals to Israel to reconsider force feeding bill: The World Medical Association's president, Xavier Deau, and chair, Ardis Hoven, have written to Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, urging him to reconsider legislation before the Knesset that would explicitly allow the force feeding of

detainees on hunger strike.² The association said that force feeding was a "degrading, inhumane treatment, amounting to torture" and that doctors should not be involved in any way. The association said that Israeli doctors had treated dozens of hunger strikers very successfully over the past two decades and were able to deal with the situation if allowed to establish a good relationship with them.

RCP launches faculty for physician associates: The UK Association of Physician Associates, the Royal College of Physicians, and Health Education England have worked together over the past two years to set up a Faculty of Physicians Associates at the royal college. Faculty members will be able to access the college's membership benefits, and work is now under way to enhance education and training for physician associates.

Lung cancer cases in UK women reach new high: The annual number of diagnoses of lung cancer in UK women surpassed 20 000 for the first time in 2012, reaching 20 483. Despite a falling smoking prevalence, the incidence of lung cancer in women is still rising because women's smoking rates peaked in the 1970s, while men's peaked in the 1940s. Men's incidence of lung cancer is falling, but around 24 000 cases are still diagnosed every year.

Most children report good experiences of hospital care: England's healthcare regulator the Care Quality Commission's first survey of children and teenagers who stayed in hospital overnight or were treated as day patients found that 87% of 19 000 rated their overall experience as seven or above out of 10.

More UK students studying in Sudan head to Syria: The Foreign Office has confirmed that seven British students studying at a private medical school in Sudan travelled to Turkey last week, believed to be trying to enter Syria. A group of students and doctors, including five Britons, from the same school in Khartoum went to Syria in March.^{3 4}

A third of world's people have no sanitation: Lack of progress on sanitation threatens to undermine children's survival and health benefits from gains in access to safe drinking water, warn WHO and Unicef in a report tracking improvements in access to drinking water and sanitation against the UN millennium development goals. The report says that 2.4 billion people still lack sanitation facilities and that 946 million people still defecate in the open.⁵

- 1 Public Health England, National End of Life Care Intelligence Network. What we know now 2014. 2015. www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england.
- 2 Siegel-Itzkovich J. New bill on force feeding prisoners poses medical dilemma for Israel's doctors. *BMJ* 2015;350:h3304.
- 3 Gardham D. Seven UK medical students studying in Sudan may be heading for Syria. *BMJ* 2015;350:h3596.
- 4 Gardham D. Time for tighter checks on medical schools? *BMJ* 2015;350:h3511.
- 5 World Health Organization, Unicef. Progress on drinking water and sanitation. May 2014. www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/2014/jmp-report/en.

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