

NEWS BITES

INTERNATIONAL

HIV tests for all

The US government has recommended near-universal testing for HIV, saying too many cases are missed by focussing on people who seem to be at risk. Nearly everyone aged from 13 to 64 would be screened under the new proposals.

Bowled over by news of second brain

'The stomach is like a geographic map of the pain in a man's soul, body and mind. The gut is a second brain – in fact, I think the stomach is more important than the brain when it comes to feelings.' So says Pierre Pallardy, a healer, osteopath and general guru of well-being who, for 35 years, has sorted out health problems, including Picasso's back problems, purely by treating the abdomen. He thinks well-being lies in the health of the physical route that takes our food from A to B. Preferring to call himself a manual psychotherapist, he claims to have dealt with everything from cancer to cellulite by treating the abdominal region. It has taken him years to perfect his system. It is only now, though, with the new science of neurogastroenterology to

back up his theories, that Pallardy says he has the courage to reveal his ideas in a book, appropriately called *Gut Instinct*. It aims to maximise health and mental well-being by setting out the ideal conditions in which the gut thrives. The scientific work that vindicated Pallardy was *The Second Brain* by Professor Michael Gershon, who says: 'Put simply, the gut can manage its own affairs without cues from the brain...it is the only organ independent of the brain.'

'No sex, we want to live'

A large number of Britons would be prepared to give up sex if it meant they would live to be 100, according to a survey. The Mori research found that 40% would pass on the passion for longevity, although far more women (48%) were willing to make the sacrifice than men (1%). Private health care provider Bupa commissioned the survey as part of a debate on the implications of an ageing population. 'Britain is facing an ageing time bomb with major challenges presented by retirement, the desire to live longer and the increasing burden of caring for old people,' said Andrew Vallance-Owen, Bupa's medical director.

Pfizer Healthcare 15455

I  my grandchildren



Op in fake space may lead to real thing

A team of French doctors operated on a man under near-weightless conditions early last month – a world first and what they hope will be a step towards operating in space. Whizzing above southwest France aboard a specially modified Airbus, strapped-down surgeons removed a fatty tumour from the forearm of volunteer Phillipe Sanchot in a 3-hour operation. The Airbus A300 Zero-G, based in Bordeaux, is designed to perform rollercoaster-like manoeuvres that simulate weightlessness. Sanchot and the 6-person medical team trained in zero-gravity machines, much like those astronauts use, to prepare for the procedure. The experiment was announced by chief surgeon Dominique Martin and the French National Centre for Space Studies.

AFRICA

Consumers need to see red when doing their bit to fight AIDS in Africa

Can buying a pair of shoes help to save lives? Bono and philanthropist Bobby Shriver think so. Six months ago they launched an initiative that would allow big business and its consumers to contribute to the Global Fund's fight against AIDS in Africa. 'The message', explains Shriver, 'to people who have never heard of RED, is simple. Keep doing what

you are doing, but do it with the right company'. Those companies are Gap, Converse, Emporio Armani, American Express and Motorola. This initial 'Big Five' – RED plans to add other companies over time – have launched special lines of RED products, which donate a percentage of their profits to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Consumers know that a few pence in their pound have just been channelled directly into the fight against disease in Africa. In the past, the Global Fund has had to rely on pledges, political and private, to raise money. Bono and Shriver's idea behind RED is to maintain a substantial, healthy stream of cash to the Global Fund from consumers.

Breast milk is key weapon in fight to lower Africa's mortality rate

The lives of a million babies could be saved every year by the simplest and most natural remedy of them all – breast-feeding. Field workers running a research project in remote Ghanaian villages have discovered that the surest way to keep a baby alive is for the mother to start breastfeeding within an hour of the baby being born. If the first feed from the mother's breast is delayed for even one day, they found the risk of the child dying within a month more than doubles. Early introduction to animal milk or any other substitute for mother's milk pushed a child's chance of living for a

CARDS*

Lipitor 10 mg, through its lipid-lowering action, significantly reduced cardiovascular events in type 2 diabetic patients ⁽¹⁾

37%

RRR of major CV events** versus placebo (p = 0.001) ⁽¹⁾

48%

RRR of stroke versus placebo (p = 0.001) ⁽²⁾

* 2 838 type 2 diabetic patients randomised to placebo or Lipitor 10 mg daily. Patients had no history of CHD, an LDL-C \leq 4.14 mmol/l and at least one of the following: retinopathy, albuminuria, current smoking or hypertension. Median duration of follow-up was 3.9 years. ** Primary endpoint was time to first occurrence of the following: acute CHD events, coronary revascularisation, or stroke

HELPING YOUR PATIENTS DO WHAT THEY LOVE
IS THE HEART OF CV SUCCESS



LIPITOR
atorvastatin 10, 20, 40, 80 mg

Power. Evidence. Confidence.

References: 1. Colhoun HM, Betteridge DJ, Durrington PN, et al on behalf of the CARDS Investigators. Primary prevention of cardiovascular disease with atorvastatin in type 2 diabetes in the Collaborative Atorvastatin Diabetes Study (CARDS): multicentre randomised placebo-controlled trial. *Lancet* 2004;364:685-696. 2. Lee JD, Morrissey JR, Mikhailidis DP, Patel V. CARDS on the table: should everybody with type 2 diabetes take a statin? *Current Med Res Opin* 2005;21(3):357-361.

Lipitor 10, Lipitor 20, Lipitor 40, Lipitor 80 Tablets. Each Lipitor 10, 20, 40 and 80 mg tablet contains atorvastatin calcium trihydrate, equivalent to 10 mg, 20 mg, 40 mg and 80 mg atorvastatin respectively. Reg. No. Lipitor 10: 3177.5/0357, Lipitor 20: 3177.5/0358, Lipitor 40: 3177.5/0359, Lipitor 80: 3177.5/0360. **Pharmacological Classification:** A-7.5 Serum-cholesterol reducers. **Indications:** Lipitor is indicated as an adjunct to diet for reduction of elevated total-cholesterol, LDL-cholesterol, apolipoprotein-B, and triglyceride levels in patients with primary hypercholesterolaemia; mixed dyslipidaemia; and heterozygous familial hypercholesterolaemia. **Contra-indications:** hypersensitivity to any component of this medication, Active liver disease or unexplained persistent elevations of serum transaminases. Lipitor is contra-indicated in pregnancy, in breast feeding mothers and in women of childbearing potential not using adequate contraceptive measures. An interval of one month should be allowed from stopping Lipitor treatment to conception in the event of planning a pregnancy. Safety and efficacy have not yet been established in children. **Warnings:** **Liver Effects:** Persistent elevations (> 3 times the upper limit of normal (ULN) occurring on 2 or more occasions) in serum transaminases occurred in 0.7% of patients who received atorvastatin in clinical trials. Active liver disease or unexplained persistent transaminase elevations are contra-indications to the use of Lipitor (see **Contra-Indications**). **Skeletal Muscle:** Rhabdomyolysis with or without renal impairment has been reported with the use of HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors. Myalgia has been reported in patients treated with Lipitor (see **Adverse Reactions**). **Dosage:** The patient should be placed on a standard cholesterol-lowering diet before receiving Lipitor and should continue on this diet during treatment with Lipitor. The usual starting dose is 10 mg once a day. Doses should be individualised according to the baseline LDL-C levels, the goal of therapy, and patient response. Adjustment of dosage should only be made after an interval of 4 weeks or more. The maximum recommended dose is 40 mg once a day. The maximum dose for treating patients with homozygous FH is 80 mg. Doses may be given at any time of day with or without food. **Side-Effects and Special Precautions:** The most frequent adverse effects associated with Lipitor therapy, in patients participating in controlled clinical studies were: diarrhoea, constipation, flatulence, dyspepsia, abdominal pain, headache, nausea, myalgia, arthralgia, asthenia, insomnia and rash. The following side-effects have also been reported in clinical trials: muscle cramps, myositis, myopathy, paraesthesia, peripheral neuropathy, pancreatitis, hepatitis, cholestatic jaundice, anorexia, vomiting, alopecia, pruritus, impotence, hyperglycaemia and hypoglycaemia. Allergic reactions have been reported rarely. Lipitor may cause elevation of creatine phosphokinase and dose-related increases in transaminase levels may occur (see **Warnings**). **Lipitor 10 mg** is a registered trademark of Pfizer Inc. **Holder:** Pfizer Laboratories (Pty) Ltd, Reg No 1954/000781/07, 102 Rivonia Road, Sandton, 2196. Tel (011) 320 6000. Please refer to detailed package insert for full prescribing information. PI REF 06/1997 115/LIP/10/2005/JA

month down to 1 in 10. In the developing world, more than 4 million babies die every year before they have reached the age of 1 month. The research, funded by the British Government, suggested that nearly a quarter of them, or a million babies a year, could be saved if they were breastfed from the first hour of life.

SOUTH AFRICA

State shifts stance on AIDS, but 'minister must go'

The government continued repositioning itself on HIV/AIDS, extending an olive branch to the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) and promising a more vigorous and more inclusive South African National AIDS Council (Sanac). But activists and political analysts remained unsure of whether the state's new self-projections merely reflected a desire to minimise public relations disasters or a more fundamental policy shift. In particular, they were unclear whether calamity-prone Minister of Health, Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, has been hung out to dry or is merely in a spin cycle.

Surge in illegal medicines, consumers at risk

An illegal medicines industry is rocketing out of control as unregistered products – many claiming to cure diseases such as cancer, TB and HIV/AIDS – are sold across the counter or on the streets. The Department of Health which, by law, has to ensure that all products purporting to be medicines are registered, is struggling to control the industry and to enforce the Medicines and Related Substances Control Act, as the industry has become too large to shut down. Many of the complementary medicines are believed to be manufactured locally. It is thought that there are more than 15 000 complementary medicines on the South African market and about 30 000 registered medicines. The products are illegal because although many claim to cure disease, they are

not registered with the Medicines Control Council (MCC). Medicine buyers should look out for a registration number, package insert, National Pharmaceutical Code and sometimes batch numbers, to verify the authenticity of medicine.

Paramedics targeted by criminals

Paramedics in Johannesburg are being attacked by criminals lurking around emergency scenes. This came to light after it was reported that two Netcare 911 paramedics were assaulted while on duty last month. Various emergency services operating in Gauteng confirmed that they had encountered incidents where criminals targeted paramedics. According to Malcolm Midgley, spokesperson for Johannesburg Emergency Services, they had experienced attacks on paramedics but it was not as bad as those experienced by Netcare 911. Midgley said paramedics were unarmed and their role was to 'treat patients and not to play cowboys'. ER24 spokesperson Pieter Schoeman shared Midgley's view and stated that in some incidents criminals would set a trap for motorist and when paramedics arrived on the scene they would be targeted.

Hi-tech breast cancer clinic opens at Helen Joseph

Gauteng Health MEC Brian Hlongwa opened a high-tech breast cancer clinic at Helen Joseph Hospital to improve the quality of health care available to women. Built at a cost of R16.9-million, the state-of-the-art facility boasts the latest technology for immediate diagnosis and improved treatment of breast cancer by highly qualified specialists in the field. Hlongwa said the new clinic would reduce patients' waiting time through its latest cancer scanning machines and it would also be used to train registrars in surgery, radiology and other disciplines.

Chris Bateman

SINGLE SUTURE

CHRONIC DISEASES EMERGE AS KILLERS IN RURAL INDIA

Cardiovascular disease is becoming the biggest killer in rural India. Clara Chow and colleagues, from the George Institute for International Health in Sydney, Australia, studied 345 people between the ages of 20 and 90 (average age 41), living in villages in Andhra Pradesh, southern India. They found that 1 person in 5 had high blood pressure, 3.7% had diabetes, 17% were overweight and 2.5% had suffered a heart attack or stroke. Heart attacks and strokes apparently now kill about one-third of adults in the region, replacing injury and infectious diseases as the main killers. Researchers blame the changes on rural Indians eating more westernised diets – high in salt and fats – and smoking more. Health care systems are not ready to cope.

Chow C, et al. *International Journal of Cardiology* (in press).