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## LUCINA

For some idiopsychological reason she does not fully understand Lucina has become a counter of human herpesviruses. She notes that the total has now reached eight (*New England Journal of Medicine* 1995; 333: 797–8). HHV-8 is otherwise known as Kaposi's sarcoma associated herpesvirus and has been found not only in Kaposi's sarcoma tissue but also in HIV related body cavity lymphomas.

*Two failed attempts at gene therapy produced an up-beat editorial (New England Journal of Medicine 1995; 333: 871–3) expressing optimism about ultimate success. The injection of donor myoblasts into the muscles of children with Duchenne dystrophy gave no increased strength and only one of 12 patients had more than 10% of muscle fibres containing donor derived dystrophin at the end of the procedure (Ibid 1995; 333: 832–8).*

*An adenovirus vector was used to transfer the CFTR gene to the nasal epithelium of 12 patients with cystic fibrosis. At low doses there was no effect. At higher doses there was a low level of gene transfer but no correction of the chloride transport defect and the nasal mucosa became inflamed. (Ibid 1995; 333: 823–31).*

Patients with slipped capital femoral epiphysis who are unable to bear weight on the joint or have a joint effusion on ultrasonography have potential epiphyseal instability and should be admitted to hospital immediately for bed rest and early operation (*Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery. British Volume* 1995; 77-B: 752–5). Those who can bear weight and have no effusion can be admitted less urgently.

*Some 15% of children admitted to hospital in Southampton with the irritable hip syndrome had more than one admission (Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery. British Volume 1995; 77-B: 748–51). These children did not differ significantly in any other respect from those admitted only once except that they were said to have more psychosocial problems. Radioisotope bone scans done at the time of readmission proved unhelpful.*

Surgeons in Delaware, USA, report very poor results from the treatment of congenital dislocation of the hip (CDH) in boys, whether by abduction harness, closed reduction and hip-spica, or open reduction (*Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery. American Volume* 1995; 77-A: 975–84). They regard boys with CDH as a high risk group to be given special consideration.

*Why do some boys with Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD) also have cognitive impairment? Dystrophin occurs not only in muscle but also in the brain where it is found in postsynaptic regions, particularly of cerebellar Purkinje cells and cortical pyramidal cells. An autopsy study (Annals of Neurology 1995; 38: 446–9) has shown that a patient with DMD had no brain dystrophin. It is suggested that this could be the basis of the cognitive impairment seen in some patients. There is just one flaw; the patient was mentally normal.*

Women in Denver, Colorado treated for bacterial vaginosis only when they had symptoms were almost twice as likely to deliver prematurely, and 3.5 times more likely to have preterm premature rupture of membranes when compared with those given treatment irrespective of symptoms (*American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* 1995; 173: 157–67).

*In children with severe head injury the rate of cerebral oxygen consumption is independent of oxygen consumption in the rest of the body (Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry 1995; 59: 359–67). Whether this is also true of normal children is not known but measures aimed at reducing cerebral oxygen consumption in children with acute head injury need to be brain specific and not aimed at reducing overall bodily oxygen consumption.*

Preschool children in New Zealand who had had a mild head injury did just as well as control children, who had had other mild injuries, on psychometric testing soon after the injury but at 6 months and 1 year they were less able to perform a test which required them to find objects partially concealed in a picture within a time limit. (*Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry* 1995; 59: 375–80). When they reached school they were more likely to need help with reading.

*The folate deficiency which leads to spina bifida may in some cases have a genetic basis. In the Netherlands a mutation in the 5, 10-methylenetetrahydrofolate reductase gene (the 667C→T mutation) was found in homozygous form in 13% of 55 patients with spina bifida, 16% of their mothers, 10% of their fathers, and 5% of 207 controls (Lancet 1995; 346: 1070–1). The homozygotes had low plasma folate and high plasma homocysteine and red cell folate concentrations.*

Four of 14 Swedish children who had idiopathic short stature, normal growth hormone secretion, and low serum concentrations of growth hormone binding protein were found to be heterozygotes for mutations in the growth hormone receptor gene (*New England Journal of Medicine* 1995; 333: 1093–8). None of 24 normal children had such mutations. Complete insensitivity to growth hormone (Laron type short stature) implies homozygosity for gene deletions or point mutations affecting the growth hormone receptor but whether heterozygotes for the Laron type are clinically affected is not known. Some of these children may respond to large doses of growth hormone but treatment with insulin growth factor-I may prove very effective.

*A hard hitting editorial in the Journal of the American Medical Association complains about lack of commitment to the abolition of hepatitis B infection (Journal of the American Medical Association 1995; 274: 1242–3). It recommends universal vaccination in infancy and again at around 11 or 12 years. In the United States the emphasis is on vaccination in infancy whilst in Canada programmes of preadolescent vaccination are being introduced (Ibid 1995; 274: 1209–13). Widespread vaccination in Alaska has reduced the incidence of hepatitis B among native Indians by 98% and no new hepatitis B carriers have been found among vaccinated people.*

A Danish study has added to concern about the effects of phenobarbitone on fetus and newborn (*Journal of the American Medical Association* 1995; 274: 1518–25). Adult men whose mothers had taken phenobarbitone in pregnancy were found to have significant reductions in verbal IG (observed mean 100.69; predicted mean 107.86). Exposure in the last trimester was most hazardous and adverse psychosocial factors added to the effect.