Criminology ranked the health industry as the most violent workplace in the country in a report last year, followed by welfare and community services, restaurants, hotels and clubs and then education. Registered nurses were the second worst affected occupation, after miscellaneous labourers and related workers including security officers, guards and ward helpers. Registered nurses also had higher levels of "workers compensation" claims involving violence than those of police and prison officers.

Christopher Zinn *Sydney*

Teenager died after surgeon "lost his temper"

A consultant surgeon standing trial at Exeter crown court for the manslaughter of a teenage patient caused her death through negligence after losing his temper during the operation, the court was told last week.

Kenneth Woodburn, aged 39, of Idless, near Truro, Cornwall, pleaded not guilty to the manslaughter of 16 year old Kelly Dent at Treliiske Hospital, Truro, in September 1998.

The teenager, who had acute myeloid leukaemia, was added to Mr Woodburn's operating list at short notice, after attempts by her own consultant to insert a Hickman line had failed.

Mr John Bevan QC, prosecuting, said that part of the patient's heart was punctured, and she died on the operating table. He said that Mr Woodburn was accepted to be a competent and respected vascular surgeon. But on this "rare if not unique occasion" shortness of time, together with things going wrong and the normal tension and stress of the operating theatre, caused him to lose his temper and act in a way that eventually became dangerous.

Mr Woodburn had been asked to add Kelly Dent to his operating list for the next day when the list was already full. He had a clinic that afternoon in Penzance, which meant he had 40 minutes to operate on Kelly Dent.

Clare Dyer *legal correspondent, BMJ*

Breast cancer drug "surpasses" tamoxifen

The British pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca claimed this week that "the established benefits of tamoxifen in early breast cancer have been surpassed by another treatment."

Dr Jeffrey Tobias, consultant radiotherapist and oncologist at University College London Hospitals (below), who presented early results of a five year trial, predicted that anastrozole (Aridex) would "knock tamoxifen off its poll position over the next 15 years."

Data came from the ATAC (Aridex, tamoxifen alone or in combination) randomised trial of 9366 postmenopausal women with operable breast

cancer. Between 1996 and 2000, women who had completed surgery were randomised into one of three arms to compare tamoxifen, anastrozole, or a combination of both drugs.

Thirty three months into the five year trial, a retrospective subgroup analysis has shown that anastrozole is significantly more effective than tamoxifen at increasing the disease free survival time. A total of 317 of 3125 women in the anastrozole arm of the study had a relapse in their breast cancer or died, compared with 379 of the 3116 women in the tamoxifen arm.

Additionally, whereas tamoxifen reduced contralateral recurrence by 50%, anastrozole improved this figure by a further 50%.

Alex Vass *BMJ*

Blinding trachoma almost eliminated from Morocco

Annabel Ferriman *BMJ*

Trachoma, the world's leading cause of preventable blindness, is expected to be eliminated from Morocco by 2005, the International Trachoma Initiative announced this week.

The initiative, founded in 1998 by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and Pfizer, is currently working in six countries where trachoma is endemic. It is shortly going to extend its work to another three countries in Africa and Asia. Six million people worldwide are blind as a result of the disease, which is caused by the bacterium *Chlamydia trachomatis*.

Since the organisation became active in Morocco in 1999, the prevalence of trachoma has decreased by about 75% (from 28% to 6.5%).

The initiative uses a four pronged strategy, known by the acronym SAFE: "S" for surgery to treat complications that may cause blindness if left untreated; "A" for antibiotics (azithromycin) to treat active trachoma infections; "F" for face washing (encouragement of more face washing to reduce disease transmission); and "E" for environmental changes to increase access to clean water and improved sanitation.

Trachoma is easily transmitted from person to person, particularly in families with small children. It occurs first in chil-

dren, who often transmit the disease to others through frequent contact. Blindness occurs only after multiple infections, usually when individuals are in their 40s or 50s. Women's close contact with children may be the factor that makes them two to three times more likely than men to be blinded by it.

Without adequate treatment, the inner eyelid becomes scarred. After repeated infection and scarring, a condition known as trichiasis arises, which ultimately causes the eyelid to turn inwards, causing the eyelashes to rub against and damage the cornea, which leads to blindness. An estimated 6780 Moroccans still have trichiasis and need corrective surgery to prevent blindness.

The initiative, which has just been given an extra \$200m (£143m) by Pfizer, which manufactures the drug azithromycin, has worked in Morocco in partnership with the country's national programme for blindness control. It has involved working with local teachers, health professionals, and volunteers in five targeted provinces. Local health workers have been trained to conduct trichiasis surgery.

The initiative, which currently operates in Morocco, Ghana, Mali, Tanzania, Sudan, and Vietnam, is to be extended to Ethiopia, Nepal, and Niger. □

Dr Khakid Salmi applies an antibiotic to a patient's eye following surgery in Morocco