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Transitional countries best at reducing greenhouse gases

The world's production of climate changing greenhouse gasses has fallen in the past 15 years but is still not meeting all the targets set by the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, says the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Greenhouse gas emissions from the developed countries that were signatories to the Kyoto protocol fell by 5.9% between 1990 and 2003, the secretariat of the convention announced. Many of the countries with economies in a transitional phase have done the best.

Announcing the data ahead of the 11th annual UN climate change conference in Montreal next week, the secretariat said that although most countries were exceeding their targets, some more industrialised nations were still falling short of agreed targets.

Spain was the worst offender, with greenhouse gas emissions increasing by 41.7% rather than the 15% target agreed in the Kyoto protocol. In comparison, Lithuania reduced emissions by 66.2%, well ahead of the goal of an 8% reduction. The United Kingdom recorded a 13% drop, just ahead of the 12.5% target.

Grainger Laffan *Bonn*

Incontinence management is inadequate, UK audit shows

The first national audit of incontinence care for older people in the United Kingdom has found widespread failure to diagnose and manage continence problems.

The audit, funded by the Healthcare Commission, examined the quality of care for 9197 older people (65 years and above) with urinary and faecal incontinence in primary and secondary care and 749 residents in care homes in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. It compared their continence care

Charity for homeless launches GP service

A partnership between the NHS and a charity that seeks to provide homeless people with a "normal" NHS GP service was launched this week. Homeless charities complain that without a permanent address homeless people can't register with a GP. Now some 93 residents of a central London hostel run by the charity St Mungo's have their own in-house GP and practice nurse.

Camden Primary Care Trust already sends GPs and nurses to homeless drop-in centres and shelters in central London. Now Kristinn Tan, a doctor (pictured above with hostel resident Hassan Ruef-Ali) and Camille Warren, a nurse, hold twice weekly surgeries in the hostel that was once a school. St Mungo's provides the rooms for free.

The launch comes as St Mungo's publishes a survey of 1491 homeless people which found that two thirds had physical health problems and more than a third who needed treatment were not receiving it. The researchers concluded that homeless people aged 45 to 64 had a death rate 25 times that of the general population.

Mark Gould *London*

to standards set in the National Service Framework for Older People and Department of Health guidance (www.dh.gov.uk).

Results showed that specialist NHS staff had good levels of knowledge about continence, but patients were often not examined thoroughly or given full assessments, and there was limited effort to diagnose the cause of incontinence. In most patients, only the symptoms are managed, when in some cases the researchers considered that there could be a cure.

In addition the audit found a lack of written policies on continence.

Susan Mayor *London*

National Audit of Continence Care for Older People is available at www.rcplondon.ac.uk.

Anaesthetist could face prosecution after GMC strikes her off

Crown Prosecution Service lawyers are to look again at the practice of a former consultant anaesthetist after the General Medical Council ordered her to be struck off the medical register last week for "unlawfully" ending a patient's life.

The service, which decided that there was insufficient evidence to prosecute Dr Ann David in 2001 after police investigated a number of patients' death, will reopen the file.

Dr David, aged 47, from Rayleigh, Essex, could face a prosecution after lawyers from

the service study evidence to the GMC fitness to practise panel, which decided that she took "active measures" to "prematurely" end the life of Robert Symons, aged 60, a milkman from Basildon, Essex.

Prosecutors will also look at a report commissioned by her former employers, Basildon and Thurrock University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, handed over last month, which strongly criticised the care of two patients.

Clare Dyer *legal correspondent, BMJ*

Police are being forced to act as social workers

People are dying in police custody in Britain because officers are having to work as "social workers of last resort," coping with drug users and mentally ill people who should rightfully be dealt with in hospital, says Nick Harwood, chairman of the Independent Police Complaints Commission.

Speaking as the commission released its figures for deaths during or after police contact in England and Wales during 2004-5, Mr Hardwick said that there could have been a "significant reduction" in the 36 deaths during or after police custody last year and in the 46 suicides that occurred soon after release if institutions properly addressed the issue of the force's role in coping with mentally ill people.

The 36 deaths in custody accounted for more than a third of the 106 people who died during or after police contact in that year.

Mr Hardwick said that violent or troubled people were being kept in police cells because of a lack of NHS beds, meaning that officers were being forced to work beyond their expertise, he said. "We need more appropriate facilities in the health sector [and] rigorous systems for the transfer of information [between police and NHS], and the police need proper training and support."

Madeleine Brettingham *London*

Deaths During or Following Police Contact: Statistics for England and Wales 2004/05 is available at www.ipcc.gov.uk.