In brief

UK couple demand greater access to post-exposure prophylaxis for HIV:

A gay couple from Kent are seeking a judicial review to try to force the government to publicise the availability of post-exposure prophylaxis with antiretrovirals for people who fear they may have been exposed to HIV through sex. The men, who have been granted legal aid on public interest grounds, are both HIV positive.

Breast screening is saving lives in England:

The breast screening programme of the NHS in England is saving 1400 lives every year, a report says. *Screening for Breast Cancer in England: Past and Future* (available at www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk) also found that women who are screened are less likely to need a mastectomy and to die from cancer than women who are not screened.

Oxygen service is delayed during handover to private sector:

Patients in England and Wales who need oxygen supplies at home faced a shortage this month after private firms took over the NHS service. The North Cumbria Primary Care Trust launched an inquiry after a woman died while waiting for oxygen. Patients with an urgent need are being told to continue to use the NHS.

Germany uses football to target smokers:

The German government is to use the World Cup as a springboard for a wide ranging antismoking campaign. The "No smoking, please" campaign, also sponsored by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), will include video shows and tannoy announcements at stadiums.

Merck wins rofecoxib case:

In the first trial involving rofecoxib (Vioxx) in a federal court, jurors in New Orleans found that Merck's cyclo-oxygenase-2 inhibitor did not cause the death from heart attack of the Florida man Richard Irvin. The company faces more than 9600 cases in the United States.

England will ban smoking in enclosed public places

Owen Dyer *London*

Smoking will be banned in almost all enclosed work spaces in England from the summer of 2007, after parliament rejected a proposal to offer exemptions to some pubs and clubs in a free vote last week on the government's Health Bill.

MPs voted against two compromises that would have watered down the ban. The government's last white paper on public health (*BMJ* 2005; 330:1468) suggested that pubs that do not serve any cooked food—about a quarter of English pubs—should be allowed to provide separate rooms for smokers. But MPs voted down this compromise by 453 votes to 125.

They also rejected a last minute proposal to exempt private members' clubs by 384 votes to 184.

The law as it now stands is much stricter than the legislation envisaged in the government's last election manifesto, which would have exempted many pubs and bars.

The blanket ban will be seen as a defeat for the former health secretary John Reid, now defence secretary, who successfully argued that exemptions should be included in the white paper's proposed smoking legislation.

The current health secretary, Patricia Hewitt, was widely seen as having been outmanoeuvred by Dr Reid in cabinet discussions over the white paper. But the exemptions proposed in the white paper proved unpopular during public consultation, even drawing fire from the British Beer and Pub Association.

In a debate last Tuesday Ms

Hewitt told the House of Commons that she was personally keeping an open mind on the question. She eventually voted against the exemptions, as did the prime minister and the chancellor of the exchequer.

Ministers also announced stiffer penalties. The maximum fine for failing to display "no smoking" signs will rise from £200 (\$350; €290) to £1000, and the maximum fine for not enforcing the ban will rise from £200 to £2500.

The new legislation will bring England into line with Scotland and Northern Ireland, which have already announced blanket bans. Scotland's will come into force on 26 March and Northern Ireland's in April next year. The Welsh Assembly is also preparing legislation for a ban that is likely to be in place by 2007.

Ms Hewitt told MPs that the health department estimates that "an additional 600 000 people will give up smoking as a result of this law, and millions more will be protected from secondhand smoke."

Film makers should show they accepted no gifts from tobacco industry

Roger Dobson *Abergavenny*

Smoking in films has gone back up to the level of 1950, a review has found. The authors' finding prompted them to demand that film producers be required to show that neither they nor anyone connected with their film accepted any inducements from the tobacco industry.

The review says that the amount of smoking in films has increased rapidly since the 1990s, reversing a previous downward trend. It says that the level in 2002 was similar to that seen in 1950 (*Clinics in Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 2006;5:73-84).

"Content analyses, focus groups, psychological experiments, and epidemiologic studies provide a consistent chain of evidence that smoking in the movies leads adolescents to hold more pro-tobacco attitudes and

The amount of smoking shown in films was beginning to fall when David Niven lit Leslie Caron's cigarette in *Guns of Darkness* in 1962—but is now back up to 1950 levels

beliefs and is associated with a dose-response relationship to subsequent smoking behaviour," the review says.

The authors, Annemarie Charlesworth and Stanton Glantz, from the Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education at the University of California, recommend that all film producers should be required to certify that no one connected with making a film

"accepted anything of value from the tobacco industry, its agents or fronts, to put smoking or other tobacco promotions in a film."

It says that smoking is more common in films than in real life, and that in contrast to true patterns of smoking—where smoking is concentrated among lower socioeconomic groups—film characters who smoke are primarily white, male, and from upper socioeconomic groups.