Letters and comments

Contributors to this section are asked to make their comments brief and to the point. Letters should comply with the instructions to authors at <http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/publications/annals/authorinstructions.html>. Tables and figures should only be included if absolutely essential and no more than five references should be given. The editor reserves the right to shorten letters and subedit contributions to ensure clarity.

COMMENTS ON

doi 10.1308/003588405X50967

Callaghan M, Lewis DK, Chipwete J, Borgstein E. HIV seroprevalence in the surgical wards of Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, Blantyre, Malawi. *Ann R Coll Surg Engl* 2005; **87**: 308

doi 10.1308/003588406X117016

Increase in septic pathology is associated with increase in HIV seroprevalence

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This interesting presentation of HIV seroprevalence in the surgical wards of Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, Blantyre mentions a belief that surgical sepsis has increased in sub-Saharan Africa but says that there are no studies to support it. My colleagues and I reviewed all operating theatre log books in four hospitals in Malawi over the period 1975–2000 and found that there was a dramatic rise in surgery being done for septic pathology and that this rise mirrored the rise in HIV seroprevalence in the general public.¹ We could not demonstrate a causal link but the facts are strongly suggestive of this.

Reference

1. Lavy C, Schmidt C, Kalua E, Phuka J. The resistible rise of surgical sepsis in Malawi. *Tropical Doctor* 2002; **32**: 98–9.

AUTHOR'S RESPONSE

doi 10.1308/003588406X117025

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I was pleased to read of Chris Lavy's study, which confirms a wide-spread perception among surgeons working in sub-Saharan Africa. It will be interesting to see over the next few years whether antiretroviral therapy, plus improved public awareness of HIV transmission, results in a reduction of HIV prevalence and so a reduction of surgical sepsis. Let us hope it does.

COMMENTS ON

doi 10.1308/003588405X51173

Bhangal KK, McNab I. A technique for nail avulsion using the cleaner found in hand-scrubbing packs. *Ann R Coll Surg Engl* 2005; **87**: 388

COMMENT 1

doi 10.1308/003588406X116936

Alternate nail cleaners

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We read this Technical Tip with interest and tried it out but would like to express concerns regarding the use of plastic nail cleaners. Different types of nail cleaners are available (Fig. 1, left [Laboratories Pharmaceutiques Vygon, 5A 11 Reuadeline, 95440