More paediatric renal donors should be used for adult recipients

EDITOR,—Appropriately, the shortage of organs for renal transplantation commands increasing space in journals.¹ One aspect, however, does not seem to have been adequately covered and offers the potential of increasing the number of donors for renal transplantation.

Paediatric donors are used for children unless they are very small, in which case they are often rejected, particularly in Britain. The United Kingdom Transplant Support Service Authority reports that up to April this year 480 donors were offered for kidney donation but only 306 were used; this indicates underuse in 174 cases (P Pocock, personal communication). This figure is probably below the true potential number of donors because the United Network for Organ Sharing in the United States reports that about 7% of the total cadaver donors recovered every year are children under 5.² Roughly one third of these are below the age of 1. In addition, potential paediatric donors are probably not offered in Britain because of their perceived lack of suitability.

The main reason for this underuse is the increase in technical complications resulting in vascular thrombosis and ureteric necrosis. In addition, it has generally been held that paediatric kidneys will be damaged by adult blood pressure.³ There is now increasing evidence that small kidneys from donors down to the age of 6 weeks can be successfully transplanted into adult recipients, provided they are grafted as a block with the aorta and vena cava.⁴ The kidneys subsequently grow normally and tolerate adult blood pressure. Most of this experience comes from the United States, Germany, and Spain, and only six recipients have received these grafts in Britain. This includes two patients from our centre, who now have creatinine concentrations of 120 and 85 $\mu\text{mol/l}$.

Use of these donors should be promoted to bring Britain into line with the United States. However, because of the specific problems, which seem to be most acute at the start of such programmes, such use should be restricted to a few centres. This would allow the most efficacious techniques and immunosuppressive regimens to be arrived at.

D TALBOT
Consultant surgeon
K L NARASIMHAN
Senior house officer
D M MIRZA
Consultant surgeon
M G THICK
Consultant surgeon
D MANAS
Consultant surgeon

Renal and Liver Transplant Unit,
Freeman Hospital,
Newcastle upon Tyne NE7 1DE

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Methods used in economic evaluations of prenatal screening are disputed

EDITOR,—Nicholas Wald and Hilary Watt's letter¹ about our paper on marginal analysis² contains some important misconceptions

regarding economic evaluation of prenatal screening services.

Firstly, we agree with the authors that they did not properly evaluate the economic consequences of changing from screening based on maternal age to biochemical screening in their earlier work³: this is precisely the point that we were making in our paper. If a new screening test might potentially replace an existing test then any extra costs and consequences of the new test should be measured to see if it is worth while, and this is the role of marginal analysis. If the authors set out with the intention of not evaluating the costs and benefits of changing from screening based on maternal age to biochemical screening what was the point of the evaluation?

Secondly, it is incorrect to claim that both tests should have the same detection rate for their cost effectiveness to be compared. In evaluations of screening for Down's syndrome different screening programmes have different detection and false positive rates, and there is no need to set an arbitrary detection rate for both programmes to make the comparison. Competing programmes can be compared over a wide range of false positive and detection rates. Indeed, this is precisely what the authors do in their figure (although they seem to use average rather than marginal costs). This applies to most forms of screening—for example, Cuckle *et al* recently compared two methods of screening for cystic fibrosis that had different detection rates and costs.⁴

Thirdly, the authors also argue that holding the detection rate at 60% for screening based on maternal age is unacceptable as this requires 30% of all pregnant women to have an amniocentesis. If this option is widely seen as unacceptable then it is an inappropriate comparison for an economic evaluation (analogous to evaluating the option of no treatment for bacterial meningitis). The appropriate comparison is outlined in our paper comparing screening based on maternal age for all women above a given age with biochemical screening.

DAVID J TORGERSON
Research fellow

National Primary Care Research and Development Centre,
Centre for Health Economics,
University of York,
York YO1 5DD

ANNE SPENCER
PhD student

Department of Economics and Related Studies,
University of York

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Rights and responsibilities in HIV prevention

Article was misleading

EDITOR,—Renée Danziger refers to an "uncanny consensus" regarding the need to protect individual human rights in responding to the AIDS epidemic.¹ She seems not to have considered that the consensus might not be uncanny but might merely be correct. In any case, although her article argues against freedom and in favour of coercion, she never specifies what form this coercion should take. If Brazilian men cannot be educated to have safe sex because of the "dominant, masculine sexual culture" what form of coercion might be applied? Is Danziger suggesting an Orwellian television camera in each bedroom?

The few allusions that Danziger makes to coercive measures are hardly reassuring. Russia has a long history of persecuting homosexuals, and its policy of compulsorily testing visitors for HIV infection has been widely criticised, as has the United States' policy of refusing entry to visitors known to be HIV positive. Cuba's policy of forcibly separating HIV positive people from their partners and locking them up is so inhumane that Danziger should be ashamed of her support for it, though she takes care to hedge her bets: the policy "seems justified" (is it or isn't it?) since "Cuba's epidemic seems to be relatively small scale." If she has any objective reliable evidence that this brutal Cuban policy has reduced the incidence of AIDS in the country then I should like to see it.

Finally, the comments of Michelangelo Signorile that she quotes are clearly intended to provide an argument in favour of individual responsibility rather than coercion. I believe that he would object to seeing his remarks in an article that, while encouraging "shifting the terms of the debate," in fact advocates restricting the basic rights of people with AIDS and those in high risk groups.

Danziger's article contains virtually no facts or concrete proposals; much of it is innuendo, which at times becomes misleading—such as the vague implication that AIDS can now be treated. As a gay physician who has lost his partner and several close friends to AIDS I find its publication in the *BMJ* deeply offensive.

PAUL BAILEY
Médecin attaché (psychiatry)

6 rue Beau Village,
F-68730 Blotzheim,
France

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AIDS might have been tackled differently if it had presented as a disease of women

EDITOR,—To understand why AIDS has been treated differently from previous epidemics and venereal diseases in terms of legislation, it is worth considering that AIDS originally presented as a disease of men spread by men. It was soon recognised that HIV can also be spread by the intravenous route, including through needle sharing by drug misusers. Later, heterosexual transmission was reported. Nevertheless, today most cases in the Western world still occur in men.

The purpose of the various legislative measures concerning venereal disease that were introduced in many countries during the 19th century, such as the inspection of prostitutes for disease, was to protect the male customers. Men might use brothels or street walkers, but to pass a sexually transmitted disease to your wife was to give the game away—and was likely to make you a social outcast.

The Norwegian artist and writer Christian Krohg (1852-1925) illustrated the degrading practice of inspection in a painting, "Albertine to see the Police Surgeon" (1885-7). It caused a scandal but is now exhibited in the National Gallery in Oslo (fig 1). Krohg originally trained as a lawyer. He was a social critic—Norway's answer to H C Andersen but working in a different medium. Indeed, the painting illustrates a detail from his own biting critical novel *Albertine*, which had been confiscated and for which he had been fined a substantial sum.

Albertine was a young girl who had entered prostitution for "socioeconomic" reasons. The painting shows her shyly waiting her turn, surrounded by experienced (that is, hardened)