China and Japan face epidemic of heart disease

Asia is facing a cardiovascular disease epidemic as a result of increases in obesity, high blood pressure, and smoking, show data analysed in the Asia Pacific cohort studies collaboration.

The findings are based on data from 600 000 people involved in 43 studies in nine places: China, Hong Kong, Thailand, Singapore, Australia, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and New Zealand. Whereas many western countries are grappling with rising obesity and have seen a peak in rates of smoking, in Asian countries—most notably China—several major risk factors are all rising.

"The pace of economic development in this part of the world is very fast, and smoking rates have increased rapidly too," said Professor T H Lam, head of the department of community medicine at the University of Hong Kong.

Jane Parry *Hong Kong*

Italians celebrate success of treatment no longer legal in Italy

A 5 year old child with Cooley's anaemia has been successfully treated in Italy with cord blood stem cells from his newborn twin brothers.

The case has been controversial in Italy because the parents initially went to Turkey to have in vitro fertilisation; preimplantation diagnosis of the fetus to ensure that the baby would not have his or her brother's condition; and tissue typing to ensure a good match for the transplant. Italy has a restrictive law on assisted reproduction (3 January, p 9 and 5 June, p 1334), and the procedure which the parents chose to have in Turkey is no longer legal in Italy.

The couple had a procedure similar to that approved earlier this month by the United Kingdom's Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority for use by

Julie and Joe Fletcher from Moira, County Down, to help their son Joshua (11 September, News extra, <http://bmj.com/cgi/content/full/329/7466/592-b>).

A spokesman for the Italian Health Ministry insisted that in vitro fertilisation and embryo selection was not essential to the treatment, which could be done "with donors born from natural fertilisation." However, he did not mention that any child born by natural methods was at increased risk of the genetic disease itself.

Fabio Turone *Milan*

GMC drops charges against paediatrician in Climbié case

A consultant paediatrician who failed to diagnose sores and scars on the 8 year old Victoria Climbié's severely abused body as intentional injuries had charges of serious professional misconduct against her dropped by the UK General Medical Council last week.

Dr Ruby Schwartz's failure to alert social services to signs of abuse led to the child's return to the abusers and her death in February 2002, when 128 separate injuries were found on her body.

Victoria had been taken to the Central Middlesex Hospital in July 1999 after waking up crying out with pain at her child-minder's home in north London. Sores on her face and fingers oozed pus.

Dr Schwartz's diagnosis of scabies was decisive in discouraging police and social workers from further investigating the possibility of child abuse, the inquiry into Victoria's subsequent death was told. Dr Schwartz had thought that some lesions were the result of scratching caused by scabies and attributed older scars to insect bites or playtime incidents.

The Medical Defence Union, which represented Dr Schwartz, said the decision to drop the charges followed an expert report commissioned by the GMC.

Clare Dyer *legal correspondent, BMJ*

Could Fidgety Philipp be proof that ADHD is not a modern phenomenon?

Roger Dobson *Abergavenny*

According to a new study Zappel-Philipp, a character in the 1846 children's book *Struwwelpeter*, is probably the first written mention of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) by a psychiatrist.

The book, written for his son by Dr Heinrich Hoffmann, founder of the first mental hospital in Frankfurt, contains a series of short stories about a boy called Zappel-Philipp, which translates as Fidgety Philipp.

In a study in *European Psychiatry* (published online ahead of publication at www.aep.lu/publishing/) Dr Johannes Thome, professor of psychiatry at the University of Wales School of Medicine, Swansea, and co-author Kerri Jacobs say the character has all the symptoms of ADHD.

"It is astonishing how clearly the typical symptoms of ADHD are depicted in Hoffmann's book. *Struwwelpeter* can be considered the first description of ADHD symptoms by a psychiatrist and thus represents an important document of medical history," says the report, which suggests that Hoffmann's description of ADHD was probably based on his psychiatric experience with children.

"Many of the ICD-10 [international classification of diseases, 10th revision] criteria for ADHD are fulfilled: Philipp fails to give close attention and to sustain attention for his task and does not listen to what is being said to him. The symptoms of

hyperactivity are evident: he fidgets and squirms on his seat and exhibits a persistent pattern of excessive motor activity... Finally, his impulsive behaviour causes significant distress within the family."

They add, "It has been argued that ADHD is a typical result of the adverse conditions of modern society, thus questioning it as a nosological entity."

"In such a situation it can be useful to go back in the history of medicine. By doing so, it is possible to show that the typical symptoms of ADHD were described as early as 1846."

● The American Medical Association last week held a briefing for journalists on attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, funded by an "unrestricted educational grant" from Shire US, maker of the most widely prescribed drug for the condition in the United States.

Shire Pharmaceuticals, which has its headquarters in Basingstoke, Hampshire, last month received approval from the US Food and Drug Administration to market its long-acting amphetamine Adderall XR to treat adults with the disorder. A speaker at the conference claimed that eight million adults had the condition.

A spokesman for the American Medical Association said: "The AMA follows the strictest ethical and editorial guidelines" with regard to such events. □

Fidgety Philipp upsets his chair in an illustration from the 1846 children's book *Struwwelpeter*