In brief

Doctors to get 3% pay rise: The Department of Health has said it will implement this week's recommendations from the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration. From April, doctors and dentists in training and consultants who remain on the old contract will receive a 3% increase in remuneration. Non-consultant career grade doctors will see an increase of 3.225%.

Pneumonic plague affects

Congo: Sixty one workers in a diamond mine in the north of the Democratic Republic of Congo have died of pneumonic plague, the World Health Organization reports. A team from Médecins Sans Frontières, Medair, WHO, and the republic's Ministry of Health have been in the area to assess the situation.

Agency warns over chilli dye:

The UK Food Standards Agency has issued a warning to consumers not to eat products containing a banned dye, Sudan 1, which can cause cancer. It was inadvertently used in a chilli powder flavouring for Worcester sauce, which was then used in various processed foods, including pizza and cottage pie. A list of affected foods is at www.food.gov.uk/sudanlist

German patient dies of rabies

after transplantation: A patient in Germany who contracted rabies after a receiving a lung transplant has died. Two other patients are critically ill after contracting the disease through infected organs from the donor. Meanwhile three other recipients of organs (corneas and liver) from the same donor show no signs of infection. The young woman donor had contracted rabies in India, although there were no signs of infection at the time of the transplantations.

Doctors are offered specialist

training in sports injuries: The Department of Health in England has announced plans for a specialist three year training course for doctors in sports and exercise injuries, backed by the Royal College of Surgeons. Further details are available from paul.loveland@dh.gsi.gov.uk

UK regulator to shame companies for misleading advertisements

Liza Gibson *London*

The UK drug agency, the Medicines Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency, says it will be "naming and shaming" pharmaceutical companies that produce misleading promotional material. The drug industry will now have to comply with new "tougher" guidance aimed at poor practice.

Companies that regularly breach the guidelines will be subject to a review of their whole advertising portfolio to ensure they meet the necessary standards. The agency says it will be publishing every review of an advertisement on its website and naming and shaming those companies that engage in poor practice.

It also plans to improve its review times of promotional material.

Professor Kent Woods, the agency's chief executive, said: "Most pharmaceutical advertising is carefully and responsibly put together, and the very best advertising helps health professionals and the public to make informed choices about health care. However, we have seen a number of examples of poor practice, where advertising is confusing or misleading. It is vital that we tackle this type of poor practice swiftly and effectively."

But the *Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin*, which assesses promotional claims in drug advertise-

ments, was not so convinced by the announcement. Dr Ike Iheanacho, the bulletin's editor, said he was waiting to see what effects the new measures would have as the agency already named on its website companies that produced misleading advertisements.

He also pointed out that when the agency made an appearance before the parliamentary health select committee hearing last year, it gave the impression that the system was running well, but now it was suggesting there was a need for "tough" guidance.

The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry said that companies are expected to comply with its code of practice on advertising so that promotional materials are "ethical and accurate." The association pointed out that its code of practice was currently under revision. □

Climate change already costs 150 000 lives a year, experts say

David Spurgeon *Quebec*

As the Kyoto protocol came into force last week, UK experts on climate change warned in a study published last week in the Canadian Medical Association's journal that if greenhouse gas emissions were not reduced "the health burdens of climate change are likely to approximately double by 2020, mostly because of increased rates of diarrhoeal disease and malnutrition in low-income

countries" (*CMAJ* 2005;172:501-2).

Sari Kovats, a lecturer in the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and a member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and Andrew Haines, director and professor of public health and primary care in the same institution and a reviewer for the panel, wrote that "the modest climate change that occurred between the mid-1970s and the year 2000 is estimated to have caused the annual loss of over 150 000 lives and 5 500 000 disability-adjusted life-years."

But the effects of climate change go beyond the gradual spread of disease, they write. "Extreme events such as floods, droughts and heat waves are likely to increase under global warm-

ing and will challenge our ability to manage health risks and test the resilience of our infrastructures in many areas, including health service delivery. In 2003, Europe experienced summer temperatures that were unprecedented in the instrumental record. In France, over 14 000 more deaths were reported during the August heat wave than were typical for that time of year, and the total for Europe was in the region of 20 000. In Paris, the number of deaths increased by 140% over usual figures."

The authors say there is a clear need to develop and evaluate effective public health interventions for such extreme weather events. But the implication of the French heat wave was that it wasn't just public health officers who were unprepared for such extreme temperatures, but the entire infrastructure.

"It will take many decades to adapt housing to maintain comfortable indoor temperatures in the face of prolonged extreme outdoor temperatures, especially in ways that will not increase energy consumption."

Although governments' commitments to the protocol were not sufficient to tackle climate change, "they form a basis for future, more far-reaching, agreements to promote increases in energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy technologies." □

A French undertaker checks coffins during the 2003 heatwave that claimed 14 000 lives across France