

Court had ordered the asbestos industry to maintain health records of workers and to compensate people affected by asbestos poisoning. "But medical screening of workers is inadequate," said Dr Tushar Kant Joshi, head of occupational medicine at the Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Hospital, New Delhi.

Doctors say that their diagnoses of asbestos poisoning are challenged by the industry. "The medical fraternity is under attack," said Dr Sudhakar Kamat, former head of respiratory medicine at the King Edward Memorial Hospital, Mumbai. "Doctors are under pressure to interpret x rays as TB or bronchitis or other chronic conditions," he said.

Ganapati Mudur *New Delhi*

Commons committee calls for more choice over home births

A House of Commons committee has criticised UK maternity services as patchy and has urged more trusts to support women who want to give birth at home.

The health select committee published two reports last week, one on inequality in access to maternity services across the United Kingdom and one on choice in maternity services.

The second report urged healthcare trusts to support the option of home births and to provide independent midwives where needed. The committee estimates that up to 10 times as many women would want to give birth at home, if given the choice, but that this choice was either not provided or taken away.

In its report on access to maternity services the committee says that not all families across the country are getting access to the services that they need.

The report identifies prejudice among maternity care staff relating to race, class, or disability. The Royal College of Midwives admitted to institutionalised racism in the maternity services. The committee recommends that trusts recruit midwives from a greater range of ethnic groups and communities

to redress the imbalance.

In particular the report highlights the problems faced by homeless women, asylum seekers, women whose first language is not English, and deaf women. Upasana Tayal *BMJ Clegg scholar*,

Inequalities in Access to Maternity Services and Choice in Maternity Services are at www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm/cmhealth.htm#reports

Kidney trafficking is "big business," says Council of Europe

The Council of Europe's parliamentary assembly has issued a report saying that, because of a rapidly increasing demand for kidney transplants, trafficking in kidneys has become a hugely profitable business for international organised crime—and for the doctors who perform the procedures.

Between 15% and 30% of European patients die while waiting for a kidney transplantation, owing to a chronic shortage of organs, the report says, noting that the average wait for a legal transplant is now three years and is expected to increase to 10 years by 2010.

Trafficking networks target poor European countries such as Estonia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Georgia, Russia, Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine, where people are pressured into selling their kidneys for as little as \$2500 (£1550; €2200), the report said.

Europe's poorest country, Moldova, where the average monthly salary is less than \$50, is a prime target for traffickers, said Ruth-Gaby Vermot-Mangold, author of the report.

Dr Vermot-Mangold said that during a factfinding visit to Moldova last year she interviewed several people who had sold their kidneys through trafficking networks that link Moldova, Turkey, Ukraine, and Israel. Carl Kovac *Budapest*

Trafficking in Organs in Europe is at <http://assembly.coe.int/documents/workingdocs/doc03/edoc9822.htm>

Study shows poor reliability of prostate cancer test

Scott Gottlieb *New York*

The standard blood test used to screen for prostate cancer, the prostate specific antigen (PSA) test, already considered to be inaccurate, is failing to identify eight of every 10 men aged under 60 who later have prostate cancer diagnosed, a study shows.

Between 1995 and 2001 Dr Rinaa Punglia, of Harvard Medical School, and her team examined 6691 consecutive men enrolled in a screening study at the Washington University School of Medicine, in St Louis. The men had their total PSA concentration measured and underwent a manual rectal examination (*New England Journal of Medicine* 2003;349:335-42). Of these men, 705 (11%) subsequently underwent biopsy of the prostate and 182 were given a diagnosis of prostate cancer.

The authors used the PSA concentration from the initial enrolment visit to determine the sensitivity and specificity of the test at various cut-off values.

The authors used a receiver operating characteristics curve to plot the diagnostic accuracy of the various cut-off values. They found that, 82% of the time, men aged under 60 who had prostate cancer nonetheless had a PSA

concentration that was considered normal. Currently, a PSA concentration of 4 ng/ml is considered normal.

According to those criteria, only 2% of the men had a false positive result—they had an abnormal PSA concentration (>4 ng/ml), but subsequent biopsy showed that they did not have prostate cancer.

The authors found that lowering the threshold from 4.0 to 2.6 ng/ml would double the rate of detection of cancer to 36%, although it would also increase the number of false positives.

In an accompanying editorial Dr Fritz Schroder and Dr Ries Kranse of the Erasmus Medical Center in Rotterdam said there was no conclusive evidence that the PSA screening test actually reduces the risk of death from prostate cancer without reducing men's quality of life.

The American Cancer Society's current recommendations say that a PSA concentration above 4.0 but less than 10 ng/ml means a 25% chance of having prostate cancer.

The risk is more than 67% for concentrations above 10 ng/ml, the recommendations say. □



Ice hockey can lead to brain injury, experts warn

Too many young Canadians risk the lasting effects of traumatic brain injury by "bodychecking"—physically blocking an opposing player—in Canada's national sport, ice hockey, writes Toronto neurosurgeon Michael Cusimano in the *CMAJ* (2003;169:124-35). Bodychecking accounts for 86% of all injuries among players aged 9 to 15 years, and this percentage is increasing. Some effects of the practice are not fully realised until the brain completes its maturation.

David Spurgeon *Quebec*