

New look for NCT

The first six weeks with a newborn baby can be the most stressful for new parents. In order to help a greater number of new parents from all backgrounds prepare for pregnancy, birth and early parenthood, the National Childbirth Trust charity is rebranding to make it clear that support and services are open to all parents. The charity will now be known as the NCT.

Belinda Phipps, Chief Executive, says: "Our new look will enable us to reach more people and help them better prepare for life as a new parent. Over the last few years the NCT has been quietly undergoing a major reorganisation. We have reorganised our structure and expanded our scope to offer a greater number of courses as well as free services such as information and support lines, our website and publications." The NCT hopes the rebrand will increase the number of people who become members.

www.nct.org.uk



Parents unaware there is no vaccine for Meningitis B

The results of a nationwide Ipsos MORI poll indicate that 69% of those questioned do not realise there is no vaccine against Meningitis B – the strain which causes almost 90% of all cases in the UK.

The survey, commissioned by charity Meningitis UK, reveals that 38% of parents mistakenly believe their child has been vaccinated against all forms of meningitis.

Meningitis UK's Chief Executive Steve Dayman said: "If parents wrongly believe their child is protected, they could become complacent and not react quickly when the early signs of the disease are developing. Meningitis can be hard to detect as many of its symptoms are similar to the common cold or flu. We believe the only way to eradicate meningitis completely is through the development of a preventative vaccine."

Meningitis UK distributes a wide range of awareness materials. The charity is offering free symptoms information packs, containing a 'Check the Symptoms' fridge magnet and wallet-sized symptoms card.

To order an information pack, call 0117 373 7373 or visit www.meningitisuk.org



Scholarship winners receive their awards

Successful candidates for the Dräger Medical Neonatal Nurse/Midwife Education Scholarship 2007 received their awards at the recent Neonatal Nurses Association annual conference in Derby. Dräger has been sponsoring the scholarship award for the past three years. Applications were assessed on subject matter, quality of application, personal development potential and possible impact for local and wider neonatal care.

Anne Aspin from Leeds General Infirmary collected the first prize of £1,250, which will help finance her neonatal/paediatric gastrointestinal course that is

part of a Masters module at Kings College. Second prize of £750 went to Mathilda Bannane of Whipps Cross Hospital, London, and will contribute towards professional development and a BSc (Hons) Nursing Specialist Studies (neonatal route). Both candidates distinguished themselves in the quality of their applications and in embracing the professional and personal development ethos the scholarship endorses.

Anne Aspin said: "Everything that I learn on my course will be put into packages for others and distributed throughout the whole of the Yorkshire Neonatal Network."

Research investigates friendly bacteria for babies

Research commissioned by the National Institute for Health Research's Health Technology Assessment (HTA) programme will investigate whether giving premature babies probiotics decreases the risk of bacterial infections. Premature babies have an increased risk of picking up infections which can cause long term complications or even be fatal.

Probiotics are beneficial bacteria found in the digestive tract which improve the general health of the gut and intestine. There is evidence that they may reduce the incidence of NEC, they are also thought to reduce the risk of infection, but there is limited evidence to support this.

A research team, led by Professor Kate

Costeloe at Queen Mary University of London, will assess the effectiveness of giving 1,300 preterm babies a few drops of liquid containing probiotics, daily. The multi-centre clinical trial will measure the number of infections, growth rate, use of antibiotics and length of stay, compared with a placebo group; it will also confirm whether their use is associated with a reduction of NEC.

The HTA programme has commissioned a portfolio of research into the area to support the work of the new Medicines for Children Research Network, set up to help develop safe and effective medicines for children – a largely neglected area.

For full details about the project: www.hta.ac.uk/1546

Gordon Brown petitioned to offer GBS test on the NHS

MPs from England and Northern Ireland delivered a petition of over 11,300 signatures to the Prime Minister calling on the Government to make sensitive testing for group B Streptococcus (GBS) available to all pregnant women on the NHS. The petition was drawn up by the charity Group B Strep Support (GBSS) and Pregnancy & birth magazine.

The GBS bacterium is the most common cause of life-threatening infection in newborn babies in the UK, affecting 700 babies each year. Giving antibiotics during labour to women whose babies are most at risk usually prevents GBS infection in the baby. GBSS says that were expectant mothers routinely tested for GBS, doctors could prevent over 80% of these infections. A sensitive test to detect GBS colonisation is not widely available on the NHS.

The Government responded: "Current policy advice from the UK National Screening Committee, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists



Pictured at Number 10 are (back row, from left) Nicholas Soames MP, Phillip Hollobone MP and Susanne Langley with (front row, from left) Jeffrey Donaldson MP MLA, Dr Chris Steele MBE, Jane Plumb, Theresa May MP, Debbie Slater, Anne-Marie O'Leary of Pregnancy & birth magazine, Nia Griffith MP and Dawn Howell.

(RCOG) and the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence is not to offer routine screening for GBS to all pregnant women because there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that the benefits of doing so would outweigh the harm. There are concerns about potential

adverse effects from the increase in the use of IV antibiotics...." GBSS points out that the policy advice is out-of-date with no indication of when the guidelines will be revisited – the RCOG guideline was due for review two years ago.

www.gbss.org.uk

WellChild



UK's first children's health helpline launched

WellChild has launched a national helpline for anyone who is looking for information about children's health, following extensive research and years of providing nursing care and medical research to UK families.

The Helpline and Information Service is free for all enquires from children, parents, carers, relatives and health professionals. The multi-disciplinary team is also happy to respond to 'theoretical' questions from researchers, students, education and social care professionals and the general public.

A text service enables young people to receive information without having to speak to someone directly.

Helpline manager, Nurse Jody Blake said: "Our service is different to NHS Direct as we do not offer a diagnostic service. We focus on connecting and supporting people seeking advice or help with any child health issue."

Helpline: 0808 801 0330, text 0778 147 2599, email helpline@wellchild.org.uk

Tissue retention rules are not being followed regarding parental consent

Research has shown that in the majority of cases (60%) following post-mortem examination on behalf of HM Coroner, bereaved parents are either not asked what they want done with material removed from their babies during autopsy or their wishes are not communicated to the pathologist performing the autopsy.

Following public inquiries into organ retention at Alder Hey and Bristol, new rules were introduced in 2005 requiring coroners to seek parental consent for one of three options with regard to tissues or organs removed: disposal by the pathologist; retention for research or other purposes; or return of the material to the relatives. It is the coroner's duty to inform the pathologist of the parents' wishes.

But in a paper by Weber et al, published in *Medicine, Science and the Law*, of 178 autopsies performed by pathologists at Great Ormond Street Hospital in the year following the new rules, coroners' instructions were submitted in only 14% of cases.

Following further letters to the coroner from the pathologist, another 26% provided instructions, for a total of 40%. Of the instructions submitted, there was lack of clarity: most did not distinguish between tissue samples and whole organs.

Of the 72 cases where parent wishes were communicated to the pathologist, over half consented to retention of material and of those the large majority (79%) consented to research use. Only six families requested that all materials be returned to them after the autopsy.

Joyce Epstein, director of the Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths, says: "It's important that someone sits down with the parents and helps them understand what can happen to their baby's tissues. FSID is particularly concerned that parents are being denied the opportunity to donate tissues for research and urges that all parents are given that option."

www.fsid.org.uk

Citation of Infant journal increases

From April 2008 *Infant* journal will be indexed in Elsevier Bibliographic Database Mosby Nursing Index/EMCare and Mosby Nursing Consult – or EMCare for short.