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1.6 million elementary school children have ADHD, says report

About 1.6 million cases of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) have been diagnosed in American elementary school children, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

In a new report the CDC said that about half of the children in whom the disorder was diagnosed had also been identified as having a learning disability. "This report serves as a snapshot of a condition that has important consequences for the development of school age children," said the CDC's acting director, David Fleming. "However, much more needs to be learned about ADHD and about the spectrum of impairments associated with ADHD."

The figures mean that 7% of US children aged 6 to 11 have the disorder. The results were obtained from national surveys conducted in 1997 and 1998, including interviews with family members of 8647 children between the ages of 6 and 11.

Rates of diagnosis of ADHD are twice as high in white children as in Hispanic and black children. Children with a diagnosis of learning disability alone were more likely than other children to live in a low income or single mother household, and children from families with health insurance were more likely to have a diagnosis of ADHD without a learning disability.

Scott Gottlieb *New York*

The CDC's report is available at www.cdc.gov/nchs

Psychiatric patient sues for cost of bringing up child

The NHS cannot be made to pay the cost of bringing up a child that a woman with brain damage claims she conceived while staying on a mixed sex psychiatric ward, a judge ruled at the High Court in London last week. But Mr Justice Cooke gave the 30 year old woman permission to appeal.



High smoking rates among Aboriginal community cause financial hardship

High smoking rates among indigenous Australians—up to 80% in some communities—are contributing to financial hardship, crime, and violence, a new report says.

It also says that cultural factors promote smoking among Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, and the report highlights neglect of the problem by governments and the public health sector.

The report was released just a week after new figures showing that Australia now has one of the developed world's lowest rates of smoking. In 2001 19.5% of Australians aged over 14 reported smoking regularly, compared with 21.5% in 1998.

The new report, by the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, says current figures on smoking among Aborigines were not available but that 1994 studies put the rate at 54%. In some communities 79% of men and 70% of women smoked. The report is the first of its type and is based on the results of focus groups in 13 communities, surveys of 76 health services, and a literature review.

Nearly all the focus groups said children typically started smoking at age 9 or 10, and sometimes as young as 6. The report highlights a lack of culturally appropriate tobacco control interventions.

Melissa Sweet *Sydney*

Tobacco, Time for Action can be obtained from the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation's website: www.naccho.org.au/

The case breaks new ground as the first claim for the cost of substitute care by a mother who is completely unable to look after her child. The brain damaged woman brought the case through her 51 year old mother, who is caring for the 3 year old girl. The mother claims her child was fathered by another patient at a hospital in Canterbury, Kent.

East Kent Community NHS Trust denies liability and disputes her story about how she became pregnant.

The mother's counsel, Nicholas Yell, told the court that she was brain damaged by a

childhood illness that left her prone to mood swings, outbursts, and promiscuity. He said she should have been put on a single sex ward or more carefully supervised.

Mr Robert Francis QC, for the trust, said: "It is denied that her behaviour is appropriately described as promiscuity, and we say that she was appropriately supervised."

The judge said that if compensation were paid, the child's grandmother "would be gaining all the joys and benefits of bringing up the baby, free of expenses." Clare Dyer *legal correspondent, BMJ*

Uninsured Americans are more likely to die prematurely

Lack of health insurance is a risk factor for poor health. Americans who lack such insurance are in poorer general health, receive inadequate care, and are more likely to die prematurely than people with insurance.

This is the conclusion of a new report from the US Institute of Medicine. The report was prepared by the institute's committee on the consequences of uninsurance and is the second of six reports the committee is issuing. The first report appeared last October.

The committee examined the consequences of being uninsured for adult patients with a number of specific conditions: cancer, diabetes, HIV infections and AIDS, heart and kidney disease, mental illness, and traumatic injuries. The report says that overall "uninsured patients have consistently worse clinical outcomes than insured patients."

In patients with cancer, for example, the uninsured have a 50% greater chance of dying and die sooner than patients who have insurance—largely owing to delayed diagnosis. Even patients who experience traumatic injury are less likely to survive if they lack insurance.

Charles Marwick *Washington*

The report, *Care Without Coverage: Too Little, Too Late*, is accessible at www.national-academies.org

Israeli doctors warn against rubber bullets

Rubber bullets should not be considered a safe method of crowd control, Israeli doctors have argued after a review of the use of rubber bullets by Israeli police against Palestinians showed a high number of injuries and some deaths.

Rubber bullets were used for the first time by British forces in Northern Ireland in 1970. They were intended to inflict superficial, painful injuries, deterring