

## News @ a glance

**Cash for kidneys?** Israel is considering passing the world's first legislation to allow people to be paid for willingly donating a kidney for a lifesaving transplant. It stipulates that money given to a willing donor is not considered payment for the organ, but compensation for the inconvenience and recovery. The law prohibits the sale of the organ itself.

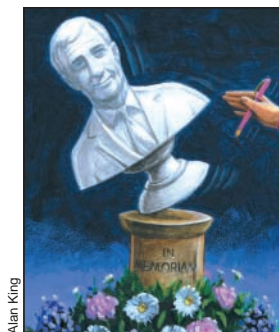
**Say goodbye, Florence:** British nurses are considering dumping Florence Nightingale as their symbol in a bid to modernize their professional image. "The lady with the lamp," long considered the founder of modern nursing, is being held partly responsible for nursing's current staffing problems. The union representing British nurses says Nightingale's legacy "has held the nursing profession back too long." Nightingale opposed professional registration for British nurses — she felt nursing was a "calling," not a profession.

**Belgium's euthanasia law:** The World Medical Association is protesting a move to change Belgian physicians' code of ethics to conform to a 2002 law legalizing euthanasia. CMA ethicist John Williams, who attended the May WMA meeting, says ethics should prevail: "We believe ethics should be sacrosanct and not subject to pressure." The WMA adopted a resolution that ethical responsibilities supersede legal requirements.

**Trampolines unsafe:** Playing on backyard trampolines is a high-risk activity that accounted for 80 trauma-related admissions to the Winnipeg Children's Hospital during 2 summers. An article in the June issue of the *Canadian Journal of Surgery* reports that use of recre-

ational trampolines caused 1.6% of all traumatic injuries seen at the hospital in 1996 and 1997, including a case of paralysis; 18% of those injured were between 2 and 4 years old. "One at a time, no fancy flips and try to keep the 2-year-old off it," advises coauthor Dr. Brian Black.

**Obit fuss continues:** Readers of *BMJ* continue to be scandalized by a recent obituary (*CMAJ* 2003;169[1]:54). *BMJ* has posted more than 110 responses, many expressing shock at the conclusions expressed about Dr. David Horrobin. The article speculated that he "may prove to be the greatest snake oil salesman of his age."



**Worked to death:** Cases of *karoshi* — death from overwork — more than doubled in Japan last year, from 143 to 317. Despite the economic slump, a record number of workers died of the phenomenon, first recognized by the health ministry in 1987. *Karoshi* follows up to 6 months of accumulated work-related stress and fatigue.

**Plan B coming:** Initial steps are being taken to make Plan B, also known as the morning-after pill, available without prescription across Canada. An 18-month consultation period begins this month. Both the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada and the Canadian Pharmacists Association have lobbied for easier access.

**No consumer drug ads:** The European Parliament strengthened its stand against direct-to-consumer prescription advertising by rejecting drug companies' bid to allow "disease education" information about AIDS, asthma and diabetes. The Consumers' Association welcomed the decision. "What patients need is high quality, independent, comparative information on medicines," it said. "Drug promotion is not the same as good quality information."

**Rodent ban to prevent monkeypox:** Canada now prohibits the import of any animal suspected of carrying or showing symptoms of the monkeypox virus. The list includes prairie dogs and African rodents, including Gambian giant pouched rats. By June 8, 18 Americans had developed human monkeypox, a viral disease never before seen in the West. Prairie dogs infected by a Gambian rat were believed responsible for the outbreak. A similar ban on imports is in place in the US.

**STD crisis:** Britain's health care system is having a hard time coping with a record number of people with sexually transmitted disease. One in 10 youths is now infected with chlamydia, while cases of gonorrhea jumped by 86% in a recent 5-year period, and syphilis by 500%. To combat this "public health crisis," a parliamentary committee wants a dedicated national framework for sexual health.

**Cigarette claims fraudulent?** Canadian medical officers of health, professors of medicine and the Non-Smokers' Rights Association have launched a legal initiative to stop tobacco industry use of the words "light" and "mild." The group filed a formal complaint with the federal Competition Bureau June 16. The European Union and Brazil have both banned this type of labelling.

**Salt tax resurrected?** Ireland is considering reintroducing the historic tradition of a salt tax — not to raise money, but to curb hypertension. Senator Fergal Quinn, a supermarket executive, is championing the idea because he believes overconsumption of salt is raising the risk of heart attack and stroke. Cardiovascular disease accounted for 42% of all deaths in Ireland in 1998. The Irish mortality rate for heart disease is the highest in Europe, at 52 per 100 000 population; the European Union average is 27. The UK has the second highest rate, 42 per 100 000, while France has the lowest, 13 per 100 000. — *Barbara Sibbald, CMAJ*

