

### Lord Carey versus the 'flat earthers'

No doubt it was sharp sub editing. But to author a Daily Mail article labelling opponents of creating three-parent embryos as 'flat earthers' does no credit to Lord Carey, the former Archbishop of Canterbury. Later in the same article, he wrote: 'The truth is that in spite of a few reservations about whether hereditary characteristics would be affected by the technique, there are absolutely no grounds for opposition.' Absolutely no grounds? Peter Saunders (*News Review*, page 5), offers a different view.

*Daily Mail*, 22 February 2015, [dailym.ai/1BKxy9o](http://dailym.ai/1BKxy9o)

### Legal highs: A regulatory headache

Legal highs mimic the effects of illegal drugs. They are achieved through taking substances bought legally over counters of retailers such as hardware stores. The high profile assault of the 4 foot 6 inches tall Alan Barnes of Newcastle had a legal high link. Few users realise legal highs cause serious long term damage to health. Somerset teenager Dan Jessop is awaiting heart test results having become addicted to a legal high nicknamed 'Spice'. Currently these substances are outside legislative control, a ticklish problem for the government.

*Daily Mail*, 24 February 2015, [dailym.ai/1B6r5Fj](http://dailym.ai/1B6r5Fj)

### 'Ignorance' causing deaths in custody

Staffs of psychiatric units, prisons and police cells are too often ignorant of mental health risks and 'basic errors' are leading to avoidable deaths of people detained in these facilities. Human rights advocates claim many of these deaths were caused by repeated 'basic errors' by staff unaware mental-health risks. The Equality and Human Rights Commission, which undertook a seven-month inquiry, concluded that despite repeated warnings, 'serious mistakes have gone on for far too long'. It continued: 'The same errors are being made time and time again, leading to deaths and near misses'.

*Independent*, 23 February 2015, [ind.pn/1B4Sp7b](http://ind.pn/1B4Sp7b)

### Liberia to end Ebola curfew and reopen borders

Liberia plans to lift a night curfew imposed six months ago and reopen borders closed to contain the spread of Ebola, as the threat from the virus recedes, the president said on 20 February. Liberia was once the epicentre of an epidemic that has killed over 9,000 people in West Africa, but new infections have fallen off dramatically in recent months. Most recent reports from Liberia say there have been no new cases for some time.

*Reuters*, 22 February 2015, [reut.rs/1De47eQ](http://reut.rs/1De47eQ)

### Wind farms: A health risk?

Are wind farms a threat to human health? Probably not, but maybe yes. A report by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) found there is 'no direct evidence' that windfarms negatively affect health. The findings, however, are somewhat tentative. According to Professor Bruce Armstrong, chairman of the NHMRC wind farms and health reference group, available studies on the subject were of too poor a quality to rule out any link. However, says the NHMRC, 'It's important to note that "no consistent evidence" does not mean no impact on human health'.

*Guardian*, 19 February 2015, [bit.ly/1zaHVNK](http://bit.ly/1zaHVNK)

### Come home plea

The appeal of sunnier climes in Australia and New Zealand means a constant stream of UK doctors seeking posts as flying doctors and a better work-life balance. The NHS is reportedly embarking on a recruitment drive to bring some of them back home. Health officials hope they can persuade hundreds of UK-trained doctors to return to an under-staffed and demoralised GP workforce. Some NHS trusts are already actively recruiting internationally. NHS Shropshire and Staffordshire have advertised in Australian medical journals, offering funding for expatriates' return, and induction schemes.

*Independent on Sunday*, 22 February 2015, [ind.pn/1zaauuW](http://ind.pn/1zaauuW)

### Two-thirds of deaths of under-75s preventable

Two in three deaths of under-75s could be prevented, say health watchdogs. They call on councils to limit fast food outlets and do more to combat smoking and alcohol. New guidance from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) calls on local authorities to help work at reducing risk of death from diseases often caused by unhealthy lifestyles. NICE says 150,000 people in England die before the age of 75 each year, and estimates 103,000 of these could be avoided.

*BBC News*, 23 February 2015, [bbc.in/1vsVCRP](http://bbc.in/1vsVCRP)

### Male suicide on the rise

Numbers of men taking their own lives in the UK is at its highest level for over ten years according to the Office for National Statistics. Data shows 19 deaths by suicide for every 100,000 men in 2013. Some 6,233 suicides were registered in men and women over the age of 15 in 2013 - up 4% on the previous year. Overall suicide rates had been falling consistently from 15.6 deaths per 100,000 in 1981 to 10.6 per 100,000 in 2007. In 2013, 78% of suicide deaths were men. The most vulnerable age group is between 45 and 59.

*BBC News*, 19 February 2015, [bbc.in/1ABXIS3](http://bbc.in/1ABXIS3)

### Teenage pregnancies down

Rates of conception among under-18s in England and Wales are at an all-time low, new official figures show. Pregnancy rates for young women aged between 15 and 17 were 24.5 conceptions per thousand, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). That amounts to a 13% drop in the estimated number of conceptions for women under 18 in 2013, down to 24,306 in 2013 compared with 27,834 in 2012. Even so, teenage pregnancies remain worrying. The percentage of pregnancies resulting in abortions among the under-18s in 2013 is at 50.7% in England and Wales, up from 48.7% in 2012.

*Daily Mail*, 24 February 2015, [dailym.ai/1aMCErQ](http://dailym.ai/1aMCErQ)

### Mid Staffs inspection costs revealed

Sending in inspectors to the troubled Mid Staffordshire health trust has cost almost £19.5m. Monitor, the government regulator, said investigating Mid Staffs 'took longer and cost more than originally planned'. The original budget was £15.25m. Moreover, the timescale of the inquiry was extended twice. The University Hospitals of North Midlands Trust took over Mid Staffs in November last year and the hospitals involved were renamed. Back in June 2013, police were brought in to investigate about 300 deaths at Stafford Hospital, after evidence showed they could have been caused by neglect.

*BBC News*, 3 March 2015, [www.bbc.in/1EGedPs](http://www.bbc.in/1EGedPs)