

**Patients with sickle cell disease were successfully treated** with hydroxyurea, incrementally increased doses of intravenous erythropoietin, and oral iron supplements.

After alternating doses of hydroxyurea on 4 consecutive days with erythropoietin on 3 consecutive days, researchers recorded a 28% increase in the number of reticulocytes containing fetal hemoglobin; a 48% increase was noted in the percentage of fetal hemoglobin. These increases were compared with results from hydroxyurea treatment alone.

Despite these positive results, the researchers caution that further studies need to be conducted with larger patient populations. Only four patients were enrolled in the current study, the results of which appear in the January 14 issue of *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

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**The federal government is considering a plan** under which all childhood vaccinations would be paid for by the state and federal governments. The vaccines would be distributed free of charge to clinics and private physicians throughout the United States. Under the plan, drug manufacturers would earn a small agreement on profit.

Despite this provision, the drug industry opposes this plan. "Universal purchase would just kill innovation because the government would control the market," comments Thomas L. Copmann,

assistant vice-president of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association.

According to government figures, only 40% to 60% of preschool children are immunized against childhood diseases; inner-city preschoolers fare even worse: 10% are immunized.

"Under our current system, with limited access to vaccine, immunization has become a privilege," says Kenneth J. Bart, MD, director of the National Vaccine Program Office in the Department of Health and Human Services. "We believe that every child has a right to be vaccinated, just as everybody has a right to clean water."

The plan is projected to cost \$300 million to \$500 million annually, reports the February 1 issue of the *Chicago Tribune*. However, no means of funding had been established at presstime.

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**Adolescents are more likely than younger children** to feel "down," according to researchers at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the Human Development Center in Duluth, Minn.

Researchers Reed Larson and Mark Ham surveyed 483 students from two Chicago-area suburbs. The children, all of whom were white, were in the 5th through 9th grades. The students wore beepers throughout the study. They were beeped at random throughout the day and asked to record their emotions at that time. Participants could choose from a range

of feelings: from happy to unhappy; friendly to angry; and cheerful to irritable. The children's overall negative moods were compared with the number of negative life events that each participant reported having during the previous 6 months.

Among the adolescents, 35% experienced 7 or more negative life events, compared with 24% of the younger children. Correspondingly, the former group also reported feeling down more often than the younger group: 23% versus 13%.

Adolescents tend to worry about the past and future—things beyond their immediate environment—whereas younger children live in the here and now, according to researcher Larson.

Complete study results are published in the January issue of the *Journal of Developmental Psychology*.

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**Eating a low-fat dinner could prevent** a heart attack hours later, according to the latest research presented at the annual American Heart Association's Science Writers Conference.

George J. Miller, MD, of the Medical Research Council in London, England, studied 170 men, aged 40 years to 59 years. He found that the men with the highest fat intake had a 12% higher factor VII level than men who ate a low-fat meal.

"The higher the level of factor VII, the shorter the fuse, and the larger the explosion of clotting fac-