POLICY & PRACTICE

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CDC Eliminates HIV Exclusion

People seeking to immigrate to the United States will no longer be required to undergo HIV testing, under a final rule issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "While HIV infection is a serious health condition, it is not a communicable disease that is a significant public health risk for introduction, transmission, and spread to the U.S. population through casual contact," CDC officials wrote in the Federal Register in November. The rule goes into effect on Jan. 4. Until now, CDC policy has been that individuals with HIV who are living outside the United States are not eligible to receive a visa for admission to the country. The CDC proposed the change earlier this year and received more than 20,000 public comments on it, the majority of which (about 19,500) supported removing HIV from the list of communicable diseases of public health significance, agency officials said.

Court Rejects Defamation Claim

A California appeals court has thrown out the defamation case against Dr. Bruce Flamm, a clinical professor of ob.gyn. at the University of California, Irvine. He was sued for making critical statements about the authors of a 2001 study published in the Journal of Reproductive Medicine. The heavily criticized study purported to show that prayer increased the success rates of in vitro fertilization. Dr. Flamm wrote in OB.GYN. NEWS on March 15, 2007, that one of the authors of the study, Dr. Kwang Cha, had been guilty of plagiarizing a later study. In 2007, Dr. Cha sued Dr. Flamm for defamation, saying that the opinion piece implied that he had been found guilty of plagiarism in a court or other official body. The lawsuit was rejected by the Los Angeles Superior Court, but Dr. Cha appealed to the California Appellate Court. That court has now affirmed the lower court's ruling. In a statement, Dr. Flamm called the ruling a victory for evidence-based medicine and said that scientists must be allowed to question "bizarre claims." "Physicians should debate their opinions in medical journals, not in courts of law," he said. Dr. Flamm serves on the editorial advisory board for OB.GYN. NEWS.

Teen Parents Not Stereotypical

While many Americans assume that teenaged parents come from impoverished, single-parent homes, teen pregnancy happens across the socioeconomic spectrum, according to a new analysis. Surveys of middle- and high-school students show that 39% of teens who had ever given birth to or fathered a child as a teenager were living with two biological or adoptive parents before the birth, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy reported. Another 19% of these teens said that they were living with one biological parent and one stepparent. About 72% of teens who had either fathered a child or given birth as a teenager were living in households that were above the federal poverty level. In fact, most of that group was living in households with incomes at or above 200% of poverty. "Despite what many may believe, teen childbearing is not limited to a particular income group or family structure, which means that prevention efforts must be broad in their design and reach," Sarah Brown, CEO of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unintended Pregnancy, said in a statement. The findings are based on an analysis of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health and a public opinion poll of more than 1,000 adults.

Embryo Donation Training

The nonprofit group called RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association is developing a series of training programs to help the medical teams at fertility clinics better understand the issues surrounding embryo donation. RESOLVE, which usually focuses on consumer education, will use a grant from the U.S. Health and Human Services Department to create training modules for health care providers, so they in turn can provide information to their patients. As part of the program, clinic staff will assess their knowledge and current practices related to informing patients about the option to donate embryos. The group RESOLVE also plans to develop online programs for continuing education credit and to offer social networking opportunities.

Pipeline Is Full of Treatments

Pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies have nearly 1,000 medications and vaccines in the pipeline to treat diseases that disproportionately affect women, according to a report released by the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America. The 969 medicines are either in clinical trials or under review by the Food and Drug Administration. For example, treatments in the pipeline include 112 for breast cancer, 86 for obstetric/gynecologic conditions, 76 for asthma, 155 for diabetes, 131 for arthritis, and 80 for Alzheimer's disease, according to PhRMA.

—Mary Ellen Schneider