

From the Editor

Tackling *E. coli*

Escherichia coli is a leading cause of travellers' diarrhoea and of bacterial diarrhoea in children in developing countries; enterotoxigenic *E. coli* (ETEC) strains are commonly isolated pathogens responsible for these conditions.

This week we report the results of a study which demonstrate that a hyperimmune bovine milk-derived anti-*E. coli* immunoglobulin with specific activity against purified colonisation factor antigens (CFAs) may be an effective alternative to the prophylactic use of antibiotics for travellers to developing countries (see page 10).

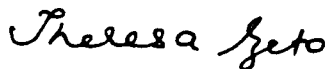
And results from a second study, involving healthy Egyptian adults, has provided further data showing that an oral whole-cell ETEC plus recombinant cholera toxin B subunit (ETEC/rCTB) vaccine has an '*acceptable safety and favourable immunogenicity profile*' (see page 8). Similar studies in children are underway, and it is hoped that trials of vaccine efficacy will produce positive results.

Mind games

It has been suggested that postmenopausal estrogen replacement therapy (ERT) may have positive cognitive effects.

On reviewing the literature, a group of researchers in the US have concluded that there are plausible biological mechanisms by which estrogen may improve cognition, reduce the risk of dementia or improve the severity of dementia. However, their review also revealed that most studies investigating these effects were methodologically flawed and their results conflicting (see page 14).

As the researchers point out, large randomised controlled studies are needed to provide more definitive conclusions, and as yet they do not recommend ERT as a treatment for Alzheimer's disease in women or as prophylaxis against such disease.



Theresa Szeto, Editor