Concern has been raised that company sponsored clinical trials are often closed to public scrutiny. Allegations that a few companies suppress negative results have prompted the US Congress to introduce legislation to create a mandatory public registry of such trials. It would require that clinical studies be described publicly at their inception and that results be added when a trial is complete. (Science 2004;305:1695)

The problem of the use of cellular phones while driving a car has now been documented. Nevertheless, many countries still permit the use of cellular phones while driving. In a study of 20 men and 21 women investigators from Israel studied visual field performance while cellular phones were being used. In this study cellular hands free conversation caused some subjects to miss significantly more points and to react more slowly to each stimulus and perform with reduced precision in this visual field test. The authors suggest the impossible—that legislative restriction on cellular phone conversation and driving may need to be based on individual performance rather than a general ban. (Ann J Ophthalmol 2004;138:347–53)

Three laboratories recently reported derivation of gamete-like cells from mouse embryonic stem cells. Much progress must be made to reach the goal of deriving germ cells from embryonic stem cells. The possibility of deriving gametes from human embryonic stem cells could allow infertile individuals to have genetic offspring. If the technique approached the same level of safety and cost as those of current in vitro fertilisation protocols, it is likely that the majority of infertile individuals and/or couples would want to benefit from it. Society places value on genetic offspring. If this link is confirmed further work might lead to preventive strategies against some cases of schizophrenia. Subtle brain damage from an inflammatory autoimmune response to viral infection may be a contributing factor in schizophrenia. (Arch Gen Psychiatry 2004;61:795–804)

The Ebola virus is among the deadliest on earth. Outbreaks last year in the Republic of Congo accounted for 157 deaths. Because it can be exceedingly contagious in aerosol form, the Ebola virus ranks with smallpox and anthrax as one of the most worrying potential biological weapons. Although there is no effective treatment, recent tests have shown a new vaccine capable of preventing infection in monkeys. Even though this vaccine has not been, and probably will not be, tested on humans the Project Bioshield Act signed by President George W Bush authorises the US Department of Homeland Security to spend up to $5.6 billion over the next 10 years to increase its stockpile of bioweapons medicines, including vaccines such as the Ebola vaccine, that the US Food and Drug Administration has not yet approved. (Scientific American 2004;291:20–4)