

much does he/she contribute to putting right the costs of family breakdown?

We know that married men earn a 'wage premium' that rises from 10–40% over time in almost all developed countries. This gain equates to having a university degree.⁸ Also, 69% of UK single mothers are in the bottom 40% for household income (it is impossible to sift out from the statistics the differences between married and co-habiting here), compared to 34% of couples with children.⁹ UK single parents are eight times as likely to be out of work and 12 times as likely to receive income support.^{10,11} Children from broken homes are nine times more likely to become young offenders, accounting for 70% of all young offenders,¹² which costs the criminal justice and education systems.

In 2000 it was estimated that the direct cost to the government of family breakdown is at least £15 billion per year or £11 per week for every taxpayer.¹³ An accountant friend worked out that if we stick with the debateable figure of £70 000, acknowledging that it is no longer the year 2000, and that we are not average taxpayers, we contribute at least £35 a week to sorting out the problems of family breakdown, the major components of this going to paying for social benefits and welfare, the criminal justice system, extra costs of education, free prescriptions and lost productivity.

All this seems pretty miserable, I admit, but maybe there are ways forward. Maybe we should be starting to appraise our marriages, or a financial or tax incentive might surely be of benefit when we look at how much successful marriage saves our economy.

Back to Emyr Gravell's ideas. Although about supporting marriage, they are not just humorous but important. Communication in relationships is vital. When we look at problems in all areas of society, invariably a communication problem lies at the heart of it. In some towns and cities in Britain individuals are starting to set up Community Family Trusts,¹⁴ charitable organisations which are starting to work with registrars, religious organisations, health services, education authorities and debt services in order to provide a simple relationship education.^{15,16} This is a model that has started to work in certain parts of the US. Community Family Trusts are in their infancy in the UK, but already there are glimmers of hope. We recognise that marriage is hard work, but as statistics show, it is the building block of our society. As we watch the institution of marriage crumble around us it is no surprise that we are seeing the NHS, education and transport services crumble around us too. We need to start to act before it is too late.

Jenny Wilson

When I use a word ...

Mabs

The number of monoclonal antibodies with clinical uses is bewildering. I recently counted about 50, from abciximab to zolimomab aritox. Their names seem bewildering too, but are actually easy to decipher.

Modern international non-proprietary drug names have two parts. The suffix, or stem, tells you what group the drug belongs to, ideally chosen to reflect its pharmacological action. For instance, -vastatin denotes HMG Co-A reductase inhibitors (-stat- often being used for enzyme inhibitors); -lol denotes β-blockers (but beware stanzolol); and -mycins are antibiotics. The prefix is chosen at will. It might reflect the structure or source of the drug (e.g. diclofenac, virginiamycin), the inventor's love of opera or the cinema (e.g. mimimycin, rifampicin; see *BMJ* 1999; **319**: 972), or just whimsy.

Now the monoclonal antibodies have a prefix and three substems. All, with one exception, end in -mab, for monoclonal antibody. The penultimate syllable (or substem) indicates the animal source and the prepenultimate syllable the target (Table 1). And the prefix (one or two syllables) is up for grabs.

Table 1. The components of the names of monoclonal antibodies.

Prepenultimate syllable (general target)	Prepenultimate syllable (tumour target)	Penultimate syllable (animal source)
-ba(c)- = bacterium	-co(l)- = colon	-a- = rat
-ci(r)- = cardiovascular	-go(t)- = gonad (testis)	-e- = hamster
-le(s)- = infectious lesions	-go(v)- = gonad (ovary)	-i- = primate
-li(m)- = immunomodulation	-ma(r)- = mammary	-o- = mouse
-vi(r)- = virus	-me(l)- = melanoma	-u- = human
	-pr(o)- = prostate	-abo- = rat-mouse hybrid
	-tu(m)- = tumour (unspecified)	-xi- = chimeric ^a
		-zu- = humanised ^a

^aDon't ask.

Finally, if the antibody is conjugated to a toxin an extra word is added; aritox, for example, denotes the A chain of ricin.

Let's try it. Abciximab can be parsed as follows: ab-ci-xi-mab. The -xi- denotes a chimeric antibody and the -ci- a cardiovascular target. Whoever named it was sleeping on the job — the target is actually the platelet. What about trastuzumab (Herceptin)? Well that's a humanised antibody (-zu-mab) that targets an unspecified tumour (-tu-). If you wanted to show that it targets the breast specifically, you could call it tramazumab.

Now play the game yourself. Imagine a chimeric monoclonal that targets syphilitic gummata; the stem would be -le-xi-mab. If it had six active domains, you might be tempted to call it sexileximab. I would.

Jeff Aronson