



Hospital Universitario Insular de Gran Canaria

# Best in class

The regional health minister visited the Intensive Care Unit in the Hospital Universitario Insular de Gran Canaria, recently, to congratulate the unit on its 'Best in Class 2009' award from the Spanish medical journal *Gaceta Médica*.

The accolade was granted to the unit as a result of the ongoing high standard of work of the professional team and the quality of the service. Minister Mercedes Roldós, accompanied by the director of the Canarian Health Service, (SCS) Guillermo Martínón, visited the hospital to thank and congratulate all those who work there for the excellent service and dedication.

This is the fourth time the journal has awarded the title, and it is based on points achieved in the ICAP index



The minister and SCS director with staff from the Intensive Care Unit

(index of quality assisted patient care), established by in depth analysis and the result of questionnaires completed by medical centres and hospitals. The adult Intensive Care Unit deals with medi-

cal, surgical, trauma, heart and obstetric cases. In 2008 it dealt with 1,069 patients. The unit is divided into four wards, each with eight cubicles which are individually air conditioned to improve

patient comfort. The service also has its own surgical unit and centralised information control. In May of this year the unit was also approved by Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance for quality care.

Posture perfect

# Sit up, stand straight

The regional departments of health and education in conjunction with the Canarian association of physiotherapists have begun a schools campaign to teach children the benefits of proper posture.

Visiting over 600 schools in the Islands the objective of the campaign, 'Health posture in school' is to prevent/reduce skeletal-muscular problems arising as a result of poor posture and carrying bags and heavy weights, and the campaign is also supported by members of the higher education authorities, as well as the departments of culture and sports and is being co-ordinated at a national level by the Spanish professional association of physiotherapists.

Students between the ages of seven and 11 will be visited during this school year and the next, and the campaign is also designed to inform parents and teachers throughout the archipelago as to the correct way of standing,



sitting, and of course what school bags to use and how heavy they can be before they begin to inflict damage on young spines.

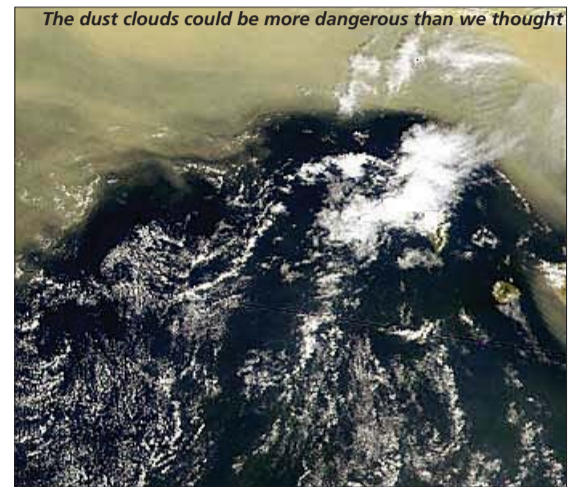
Information will be distributed on leaflets, with co-ordinated visits from physiotherapists to offer both practical and theoretical assistance, holding a series of workshops as well as using other didactic tools to get the important

**LEARNING GOOD POSTURE EARLY IN LIFE IS VITALLY IMPORTANT**

information to where it is needed. The information will be presented in ways that will be accessible to the youngest of students upwards, to help them develop good postural habits early in life.

Calima

# The air we breathe



A worrying doctoral thesis has just been presented by Silvia Alonso in the University of La Laguna under the title, Characteristics of the intrusions of African dust in the Canaries.

In one of the chapters, Alonso confirms the presence of radioactive isotopes in the calima dust clouds that reach the islands.

The study reveals that one of the elements found suspended in the dust is Cesium 137, a material which is one of the end products of nuclear arms testing. The author pointed out that it could be the remains of French nuclear testing in the north of Africa between 1960 and 1966.

High doses of Cesium 137 can be extremely poisonous and produce cancer. Lab tests using rats showed a significant increase in the number of cases of breast cancers in these animals. The risk of this substance is in its rapid integration in the biological cycles, the way it builds up in the land ecosystems and the way it can be carried by air currents.

So far, the only worries that have been shown by the medical profession regarding the calima episodes have been for people with breathing difficulties. There have been some cases of acute asphyxia and other milder symptoms such as eye irritations, itchy throats and similar. However with the detection of these substances, there could well be new health problems associated with this atmospheric phenomenon.

A second radioactive material discovered by Alonso in the dust is Berilio 7, a naturally occurring element in the higher layers of the atmosphere. No studies have yet been carried out on the possible detrimental effects that this element may cause over a long period of exposure.

Politics and health

# Computers and myopia

The decision by the Valencian authorities not to give free computers to school-going children, a plan proposed by the national government, has come under fire with accusations of using children as political pawns.

The powers-that-be in Valencia are from the Partido Popular, the national government is socialists. Many feel that the decision by Valencia to reject the national plan is politically fuelled rather than stemming from genuine concern for the well being of the children in question. The reason being given is that computers cause myopia, though the percentage of cases in young users that can be definitively linked to computer use is queried.

Vision

# Eye implants

People who have to wear glasses in middle or old age could have their eyesight restored or even at least obtain an improvement with the latest eye implants, according to a British surgeon.

Light-adjustable lenses (LAL) offer the possibility of 20/20 vision to thousands of people who become short-sighted or develop cataracts with age. The lenses are similar to existing lens implants, or intraocular lenses (IOL), used to treat cataracts. But doctors can adjust them after they have been implanted, tailoring the amount of correction to a patient's needs and potentially eliminating the need for spectacles. The lenses, already in use in Germany and the United States, cost £600 each, ten times as much as standard IOLs. The lens can be bifocal or varifocal, so as well as giving people good distance vision, they will also have good reading vision.