

Treatment to reverse Down's 'in five years'

BY SARAH HILLS

A DRUG to reverse the mental effects of Down's syndrome could be discovered within five years following a major breakthrough.

Researchers have identified a gene in Down's sufferers which causes the brain cells responsible for attention and memory to stop functioning normally.

Now the US experts want to test a group of drugs they hope will reverse the gene's effects in people of all ages who have the condition. Prof William

AUTISM LINK RULED OUT

ANOTHER study has ruled out a link between the MMR jab and autism in children. Tests on 28,000 youngsters in Canada found no reason to worry about the combined vaccine for measles, mumps and rubella, experts said yesterday. Fears

about the MMR vaccine have focused on a mercury-based compound it contains, thimerosal, which is blamed for damaging children's immune systems. The new study found autism rates were higher in children given jabs with thimerosal removed.

Mobleý, who led the study, said: 'We may now have the opportunity to make a big difference in people's lives. If we

can decrease the expression of this gene, we may be able to provide something more than supportive care to

people with Down's syndrome.' About 60,000 people in Britain are thought to have Down's syndrome. It is caused by an extra copy of chromosome 21, which leads to genes making unusually high doses of proteins.

Prof Mobley, of Stanford University in California, found that deleting the extra copy of the gene in mice which had the same genetic condition as Down's largely solved their mental retardation problems.

However, the physical effects of Down's would remain irreversible.



Tragedy:
Pte
Gavin
Williams

More time in soldier probe

POLICE have been given a further 36 hours to question four soldiers suspected of the manslaughter of serviceman Gavin Williams. The men, aged 44, 35, 31 and 28, were held after Pte Williams, 22, from Hengoed, Mid-Glamorgan, died during exercises at barracks in Tidworth, Wiltshire, on Monday.