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*Correspondents should present their references in the Vancouver style (see examples in these columns). In particular, the names and initials of all authors must be given unless there are more than six, when only the first three should be given, followed by et al; and the first and last page numbers of articles and chapters should be included. Titles of papers are not, however, included in the correspondence section.*

## The starving of the medical schools

SIR,—Your assistant editor, Dr Richard Smith, is to be commended on drawing particular attention to the damage which is being done to medical education and research, and also to the provision of patient services in the NHS, by the cuts in public spending on university education (30 January, p 335). As he so ably indicates, the reductions which have already taken place are only the start of what is planned as a continuing cut.

In commenting on the progressive impoverishment of the British university system (p 294) you state that one of the most distressing features of the current crisis is that medical schools do not have a single forum in which to discuss the options available or a single voice with which to confront the University Grants Committee and the Government. May I draw your attention to the University Hospitals Association, which was formed in 1975 to remedy this very defect? The inspira-

tion came from Dr Kenneth MacLean, who saw the need for such a body which would combine in a single organisation not only university but also NHS interests and expertise. The membership is a corporate one and includes not only university faculties of medicine and medical and dental schools but also hospital medical and dental committees in those health districts which are associated with medical schools. Deans of general medical and dental schools and of postgraduate schools, postgraduate deans, and chairmen of medical committees of the associated health districts meet regularly to discuss the broad issues concerned with medical education and research and the mutual interdependence of the NHS and the universities. For while the Health Service requires the universities to provide graduates in medicine and dentistry the universities in their turn need the clinical facilities for teaching and research which only the NHS

can provide, and this is recognised by the specific duty laid on the Secretary of State for Social Services to make available such facilities as he considers are reasonably required by any university which has a medical school.

Over the years a reasonable working arrangement has developed between the universities and the health services in which precise boundaries have not been clearly defined, a "knock-for-knock" arrangement, and this has been of great mutual advantage. Arrangements which have been built up gradually and which are working well in the interests of medicine and dentistry in their broadest aspects are now in serious danger of being destroyed.

Nearly three years ago, in conjunction with the Medical Academic Staff Committee of the British Medical Association and the Federation of Associations of Clinical Professors, the University Hospitals Association organised a