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We may return unduly long letters to the author for shortening so that we can offer readers as wide a selection as possible. We receive so many letters each week that we have to omit some of them. Letters should be typed with double spacing between lines and must be signed personally by all their authors. We cannot acknowledge their receipt unless a stamped addressed envelope or an international reply coupon is enclosed.

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.

Electron microscopy: an essential tool for morphological diagnosis?

SIR,—In the recent leading article "Electron microscopy: an essential tool for morphological diagnosis?" (26 June, p 1897) Dr E G J Olsen made several comments concerning the value of this equipment in influencing patient management. It was not made clear how patients benefited, and one was left with the impression that it was the clinicians who gained from increased confidence in their decisions. I found it difficult to ascertain how many patients would live longer, die happier, or survive in more comfort.

In a society where money was not at issue it would be appropriate to support the final recommendation from a member of the staff of the National Heart Hospital that "the electron microscope should now be accepted

as an important component in routine pathology laboratories." We are not living in a society where cash is plentiful. I recently visited, as a member of a Health Advisory Service team, an area in which the psychiatric services were floundering; at least part of the cause was shortage of finance. In the nearby general hospital an electron microscope was on order. It would probably have taken the cancellation of a thousand electron microscopes to make an appreciable contribution to the local psychiatric needs but an electron microscope is not sufficient in itself—there are revenue consequences, to say nothing of cries of "me too."

I trust when decisions are made at all the new committees more than lip service will be

paid to the needs of the many Cinderellas of the National Health Service.

C P SEAGER

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SIR,—We read with interest the leading article by Dr E G J Olsen (26 June, p 1897) on "Electron microscopy: an essential tool for morphological diagnosis?" in which he stressed the value of electron microscopy in diagnostic histopathology. Among the diagnostic problems encountered by the histopathologist working in a routine laboratory are some of the undifferentiated round small cell tumours and the undifferentiated spindle-