

BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL

STA/STA

U. S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY
RECEIVED

DEC 17 1982

PROCUREMENT SECTION
CURRENT SERIAL RECORDS

SATURDAY 4 DECEMBER 1982

LEADING ARTICLES

Can infection be abolished?

SIR JAMES HOWIE 1593

Monoamine oxidase inhibitors in depression

SYDNEY BRANDON 1594

Haematuria and exercise-related haematuria

PRISCILLA KINCAID-SMITH 1595

Sensitivity to tartrazine KLARA MILLER 1597

Sjögren's syndrome J M GUMPEL 1598

CLINICAL RESEARCH • PAPERS AND SHORT REPORTS • PRACTICE OBSERVED

Reduced sinus arrhythmia in diabetic autonomic neuropathy: diagnostic value of an age-related normal range SHIRLEY A SMITH 1599

Microscopic colitis—a cause of chronic watery diarrhoea JEREMY G C KINGHAM, DAVID A LEVISON, JOANNA A BALL, ANTHONY M DAWSON 1601

Rate of inactivation of cytomegalovirus in raw banked milk during storage at -20°C and pasteurisation HENRIK FRIIS, H KERZEL ANDERSEN 1604

Enkephalin inhibits relaxation of the lower oesophageal sphincter J M HOWARD, M R BELSHEIM, S N SULLIVAN 1605

Anaphylactoid reactions due to haemodialysis, haemofiltration, or membrane plasma separation A J NICHOLLS, M M PLATTS 1607

Haemophilia and the kidney: assessment after 11-year follow-up

M SMALL, P E ROSE, N McMILLAN, J J F BELCH, E B ROLFE, C D FORBES, J STUART 1609

Gonadal function in Hodgkin's disease: long-term follow-up of chemotherapy

J H X WAXMAN, Y A TERRY, P F M WRIGLEY, J S MALPAS, L H REES, G M BESSER, T A LISTER 1612

Isolated testicular relapse in boys with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia: treatment and outcome

K TIEDEMANN, J M CHESSELLS, R M SANDLAND 1614

Multiple sclerosis plaque mimicking tumour on computed tomography R J ABBOTT, J G HOWE, S CURRIE, I HOLLAND 1616

Renal artery thrombosis caused by antihypertensive treatment A B SHAW, S K GOPALKA 1617

Rastafarianism and the vegans syndrome MARIE CAMPBELL, W S LOFTERS, W N GIBBS 1617

Neurofibromatosis, pheochromocytoma, and somatostatinoma A M CANTOR, C C RIGBY, P R BECK, D MANGION 1618

Raised creatine kinase activity and presence of creatine kinase MB isoenzyme after exercise

D ROBINSON, P T WILLIAMS, D J WORTHINGTON, T J N CARTER 1619

Rheumatoid arthritis developing after plant thorn synovitis S J HAWKINS, D R BLAKE, M DOHERTY, N D HALL 1620

Helping agencies SIMON A SMAIL 1621

Drug treatment in elderly patients: GP audit CEDRICK R MARTYS 1623

Research in General Practice: A nurse's experience in the MRC's hypertension trial GRETA BARNES 1625

Graves Medical Audiovisual Library: 1957-82 VALERIE GRAVES 1627

MEDICAL PRACTICE

Alternative medicine: cost and subjective benefit in rheumatoid arthritis T PULLAR, H A CAPELL, A MILLAR, R G BROOKS 1629

Family Medicine: Thamesmead: lessons learnt P M HIGGINS 1631

Replanning of an intensive therapy unit D W RYAN, P F COPELAND, J MILLER, R FREEMAN 1634

Essentials of Health Economics: Part V (continued)—Assessing the costs and benefits of treatment alternatives

M F DRUMMOND, G H MOONEY 1638

Letters to a Young Doctor: Moving up the registrar ladder PHILIP RHODES 1639

ABC of Brain Stem Death: Diagnosis of brain stem death—II CHRISTOPHER PALLIS 1641

Any Questions? 1633, 1637, 1640

Medicine and Books 1645

Personal View MEDICAL STUDENT 1650

CORRESPONDENCE—List of Contents 1651

OBITUARY 1667

NEWS AND NOTES

Views 1663

Epidemiology—Disease attributed to dairy products 1664

Medicolegal—Libel by cartoon 1664

Parliament—

Health and Social Services and Social Adjudications Bill 1665

Medical News 1665

BMA Notices 1666

SUPPLEMENT

The Week 1669

Health Services Bill opens in Lords WILLIAM RUSSELL 1670

Child health records and computing COLIN H M WALKER 1671

Buying added years: BMA advice on improving pensions 1672

From the GMSC: Membership of independent FPCs;

reduction in average list size 1674

CORRESPONDENCE

| | | | | | |
|--|------|--|------|---|------|
| Spina bifida and vitamins R Harris, FRCPATH, and A P Read, PHD | 1651 | Maintenance of remission in ulcerative colitis with oral preparation of 5-aminosalicylic acid C J Hawkey, MRCP, and M J S Langman, FRCP; M J Dew, FRCP | 1656 | Influence of previous gold toxicity on subsequent development of penicillamine toxicity I J L Goldberg, FRCPATH, and others | 1659 |
| "Know then thyself" Malvena Sullivan, MB; K Norcross, FRCS | 1651 | Drivers, binge drinking, and gammaglutamyltranspeptidase P M S Clark, PHD, and others | 1656 | Lumbar puncture in spontaneous subarachnoid haemorrhage G Findlay, FRCS | 1659 |
| Evaluating preregistration posts I R Wakefield, MB | 1652 | Breech: vaginal delivery or caesarean section? B A Lieberman, MRCOG, and M L Chiswick, FRCP | 1657 | Blood gas analysis: effect of air bubbles in syringe and delay in estimation R G Mueller, MS, and G E Lang, MD | 1659 |
| Finishing up the preregistration year P L Towers, BA | 1652 | Advertisements referring to unpublished data S Spencer, FRCPsych | 1657 | Histopathology services for developing countries A C McDougall, FRCP | 1660 |
| Dexamethasone deleterious in cerebral malaria D A Warrell, FRCP, and others | 1652 | In vitro fertilisation J A Hicklin, FRCPED | 1657 | Death due to overdose of indoramin P K Marrott, FRACP, and J F Waterfall, PHD | 1660 |
| Chemoprophylaxis of malaria in Africa B A Southgate, FFCM | 1652 | Benoxaprofen: effect on cutaneous lesions in psoriasis D S Rampton, MRCP, and C J Hawkey, MRCP | 1657 | Who is taking their tablets? G A Ellard, PHD, and others | 1660 |
| A case of Lassa fever J E Banatvala, FRCPATH | 1653 | Surveillance of patients attending a diarrhoeal disease hospital in Bangladesh Gillian D Yudkin, MB | 1657 | Changing the method of selection at Northwick Park Susie M K Barry, PHD | 1661 |
| Peer review weighed in the balance I Smith, FRCPATH | 1653 | Comparison of whole-blood eosinophil counts in extrinsic asthmatics with acute and chronic asthma J B Warren, MRCP, and others; P H Howarth, MRCP | 1657 | Serological tests for syphilis J F Mornex, MD, and N Monplaisir, MD | 1661 |
| Discussion of an individual joint T G Wadsworth, FRCS | 1653 | Factors protective against retinopathy in insulin-dependent diabetic free of retinopathy for 30 years J M Walker, MRCP, and others | 1658 | Campylobacter enteritis and erythema nodosum T W Hoskins, MB | 1661 |
| Becoming a member of the royal colleges of physicians R M Harden, FRCPGLAS | 1654 | Promoting children's home safety J C Catford, MRCP, and others; A F Colver, MRCP | 1658 | Future of cottage hospitals J A Grant, MRCP, and others | 1661 |
| Energy intake and weight gain of very low birthweight babies fed raw expressed breast milk J S Forsyth, MRCP; S A Spencer, MRCP, and D Hull, FRCP; R J Stocks, MRCP, and D P Davies, FRCP; J F T Glasgow, FRCP | 1654 | | | What's in a waiting list? Q P Lee, MFCM | 1662 |
| Confidentiality of medicolegal reports Patricia B R Kolman, MRCPsych | 1655 | | | Hours of work of junior hospital doctors J Angell, FRCS | 1662 |
| Confidentiality of patients' records D E Yarham | 1655 | | | An association disbands J S Horner, FFCM | 1662 |
| Metabolic consequences of salbutamol poisoning reversed by propranolol A D Struthers, MRCP, and others; J M C Connell, MRCP, and G T McInnes, MRCP | 1655 | | | Clinicians' contributions to district management teams R T Marcus, FRCS | 1662 |
| Hypersensitivity after a sea urchin sting G H Valentine, FRCP | 1656 | | | | |

From 1 January 1983 we shall include in references to letters the titles of articles as well as journal titles. This will bring letter references into line with the Vancouver style, as used in the rest of the BMJ, and from now on correspondents should supply article titles (and the titles of chapters in multi-author books) in their references.

Spina bifida and vitamins

SIR,—Anybody concerned to understand and prevent neural tube defects must welcome the proposed Medical Research Council trial of vitamin supplementation. Two multicentre collaborative trials^{1,2} have shown a highly significant reduction in the recurrence rate of neural tube defects among mothers given vitamin supplements. We have always accepted that these non-randomised trials do not prove conclusively that vitamin supplements prevent neural tube defects. At the time of the first trial our Manchester ethical committee believed that randomisation was ethical, but this was apparently not the view of two other ethical committees; in retrospect the wisdom of the minority vote is generally accepted.

We understand that the women joining the proposed Medical Research Council trial will give fully informed consent. The reputations of the clinicians concerned and the vigilance of the now alerted local ethical committees will ensure that women understand that there is evidence for a relation between poor diet and neural tube defects and for the protective effect of periconceptional vitamin supplements. Subjects randomised in the Medical Research Council trial have a 50% chance of receiving no folate and a 25% chance of getting no vitamins at all. Frank counselling may perhaps

lead to few women agreeing to enter the trial, but if this happens the need for a rethink should rapidly become evident. Our main scientific reservation about the trial is that women who do take part after such counselling might then independently (and unbeknown to the organisers) improve their diet or even buy vitamin pills (which will not contain folate, but there is no certainty that folate is the important ingredient). What will happen if the final result is a low recurrence rate among all groups in the trial with no significant difference between women given supplements and controls? Will that be taken to show that vitamins are ineffective? Not necessarily, because we are sure the organisers of the Medical Research Council trial appreciate that they would need to prove that cryptic self supplementation did not take place. In the North Western region three quarters of our local obstetricians now offer some form of vitamins to women with a history of neural tube defect though not necessarily the right vitamins at the right time. It was this local situation and not any doubts about the desirability or ethics of a randomised trial which led us to decline participation in the Medical Research Council trial.

Meanwhile it is ethically imperative that there should be a policy for the next few years until the definitive answer, we hope,

emerges. We believe that supplementation in accordance with the protocol of Smithells *et al*¹ should be offered to all women at risk unless they have enrolled with fully informed consent in the Medical Research Council trial. As a precaution in case the Medical Research Council trial should fail to give a clear result all women given supplements must be registered centrally in each region and carefully followed up. Supplementation policy must be reviewed in perhaps three years and then at regular intervals. The incidence of neural tube defects in women receiving and those not receiving supplements should be carefully monitored. We urge the appropriate regional committees in the UK immediately to address this task.

RODNEY HARRIS
A P READ

Department of Medical Genetics,
St Mary's Hospital,
Manchester M13 0JH

¹ Smithells RW, Sheppard S, Schorah CJ, *et al*. *Arch Dis Child* 1981;56:911-8.

² Smithells RW, Sheppard S, Schorah CJ, *et al*. *Lancet* 1981;ii:1425.

"Know then thyself"

SIR,—I wish to commend Professor Philip Rhodes (13 November, p 1404) on his suggestion of self appraisal when a doctor is