

BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL

SATURDAY 19 NOVEMBER 1983

LEADING ARTICLES

- Proteinuria** MARTIN BARRATT 1489
Hypertension and wellbeing J S GILL, D G BEEVERS 1490
Chest pain in patients with normal coronary arteriograms SYDNEY BRANDON 1491

- A better deal for overseas doctors**
DAVID INNES WILLIAMS, ALEX PATON 1492
Microbiological quality assessment and the clinician
P S GARDNER 1493

CLINICAL RESEARCH • PAPERS AND SHORT REPORTS • PRACTICE OBSERVED

- Effect of ethanol on vascular prostacyclin (prostaglandin I₂) synthesis, platelet aggregation, and platelet thromboxane release**
D P MIKHAILIDIS, J Y JEREMY, M A BARRADAS, N GREEN, P DANDONA 1495
- Role of cold and emotional stress in Raynaud's disease and scleroderma** ROBERT R FREEDMAN, PETER IANNI 1499
- Prospective study of follow up alone in stage I teratoma of the testis** G READ, R J JOHNSON, P M WILKINSON, B EDDLESTON 1503
- Patients with angina with normal and near normal coronary arteries: clinical and psychosocial state 12 months after angiography**
CHRISTOPHER BASS, CLYDE WADE, DAVID HAND, GRAHAM JACKSON 1505
- Epidemiological study of prevalence of chlorpropamide alcohol flushing in insulin dependent diabetics, non-insulin dependent diabetics, and non-diabetics** S NG TANG FUI, H KEEN, R J JARRETT, C STRAKOSCH, T MURRELLS, P MARSDEN, R STOTT 1509
- Heberden's nodes in osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis** GILES CAMPION, PAUL DIEPPE, IAIN WATT 1512
- Mercuric chloride poisoning in a 23 month old child** T STACK, J G BISSENDEN, G HOFFMAN, W B YEOMAN 1513
- Allergic reaction to rubber chemicals in haemodialysis equipment** P K BUXTON, S M GOING, J A A HUNTER, R J WINNEY 1513
- Acute hypotensive response to nifedipine added to prazosin in treatment of hypertension** L D JEE, L H OPIE 1514
- Reduction in evidence in children's teeth of use of tetracyclines** M J KINIRONS 1515
- Addiction to aerosol treatment: the asthmatic alternative to glue sniffing** P J THOMPSON, P DHILLON, P COLE 1515
- Does metabolic bone disease follow truncal vagotomy and gastrojejunostomy?** A D IRVING, G SMITH, G R D CATTO 1516
- A Difficult Case: Does it help to know your patient?** ALASTAIR F WRIGHT 1517
- First Five Years In Practice: the 1970s: Shaping the whole working life** SIMON BARLEY 1519
- Correction: Before and after the "appointed day"** HEWETSON 1520

MEDICAL PRACTICE

- The State of the Prisons: "Disorder, disillusion, and disrepute"** RICHARD SMITH 1521
- Special care nurseries: admitting to a policy** EDMUND HEY 1524
- Causes and management of anal irritation** JOHN ALEXANDER-WILLIAMS 1528
- ABC of Sexually Transmitted Diseases: Vaginal discharge: diagnosis** MICHAEL W ADLER 1529
- Epidemic of gastroenteritis caused by oysters contaminated with small round structured viruses**
O N GILL, W D CUBITT, D A MCSWIGGAN, B M WATNEY, C L R BARTLETT 1532
- USSR Letter: Investigations by the People's Control Committee** MICHAEL RYAN 1535
- Lesson of the Week: Deaths associated with intrauterine contraceptive devices in the United Kingdom between 1973 and 1983**
P A SMITH, C J ELLIS, R A SPARKS, J GUILLEBAUD 1537
- Any Questions** 1527
- Materia Non Medica—Contributions from J P SUNTER, SIR IAN FRASER** 1527
- Medicine and Books** 1539
- Medicine and the Media—Contributions from DAVID MORRIS, TONY SMITH, ROBIN PHILIPP** 1543
- Personal View** ROSEMARY MACDONALD 1544

CORRESPONDENCE—List of Contents 1545

OBITUARY 1556

NEWS AND NOTES

- Views** 1560
- Medical News** 1561
- BMA Notices** 1561
- One Man's Burden**
MICHAEL O'DONNELL 1562

SUPPLEMENT

- The Week** 1563
- BMA wins concessions on Police Bill** WILLIAM RUSSELL 1564
- Hospital patients' complaints procedure** 1565
- Junior members forum to meet in Oxford** 1565
- RCN's campaign on health service cuts** 1566

CORRESPONDENCE

- Skull radiology in patients with psychiatric illness**
A S David, MRCP; A J Thompson, MB, and J F Calder, FRCP; S W Lewis, MB; C D Marshall, MB..... 1545
- Head injuries in adults**
G J de Lacey, FRCP, and B K Wignall, FRCP; J J Jones, MFCM..... 1546
- The end of clinical freedom**
R M Temple, MB; P Jacobs, FRCP..... 1546
- Dihydrocodeine overdose treated with naloxone infusion**
S G Parker, MRCP, and D G Thomas, MB; B M Buckley, MRCP, and J A Vale, MD; P G Blain, MRCP, and R J M Lane, MRCP; P Wen, MB; Nancy Redfern, FFARCS..... 1547
- Sport for tall**
T Khosla, PHD..... 1548
- Improving medical meetings**
J S Crawford, FFARCS..... 1548
- Fatal heat stroke in a long distance runner**
F R Ellis, FFARCS, and I T Campbell, FFARCS; M Khogali, MFOM, and others... 1548
- Candidiasis in heroin abusers**
Jennifer Hoy, MB, and Bryan Speed, FRACP; S Dally and others..... 1549
- Comparison of accuracy of digital and standard mercury thermometers**
K J Collins, MB, and A N Exton-Smith, FRCP..... 1549
- Effect of thalidomide on orogenital ulceration**
J Efthimiou, MRCP, and S Spiro, FRCP; P W Bowers, FRACP, and R J Powell, MRCP..... 1550
- A perspective on SWOP (Speakers Who Oppose Publication)**
J R A Mitchell, FRCP..... 1550
- Alternative mechanisms for the hypotensive effects of adrenergic blockade**
I A Greer, MB, and others..... 1551
- Alpha₁ antagonistic and antiserotonergic action during administration of ketanserin**
J Vermeylen, MD, and others..... 1551
- The incidental malignant melanoma**
R W Griffiths, FRCS, and James C Briggs, FRCPATH..... 1552
- Anorexia nervosa**
S W Brown, MRCPsych, and G Szmukler, MRCPsych..... 1552
- Excess mortality among children discharged from hospital after treatment for diarrhoea in rural Bangladesh**
E M Mankazana; S K Roy, MB, and others 1552
- Twelfth rib syndrome**
R C F Catterall, FRCS..... 1553
- Breast feeding and atopic eczema**
J M Mahood, MRCP..... 1553
- ABC of sexually transmitted diseases**
A T L Chin, MRCPATH..... 1553
- Honorary senior registrars**
R P H Thompson, FRCP..... 1554
- Business management for the NHS**
Mary White, MB..... 1554
- Open letter to John Patten**
I R Stuart, MRCP..... 1554
- Mental Health Act Commission and the code of practice**
S Spencer, FRCPsych..... 1554
- Points Treatment of cutaneous leishmaniasis (A Bryceson); Parathyroid hormone and 25-hydroxyvitamin D concentrations in elderly people (N Lawson and A J Taylor); Q fever (P M Fleiss); A National Museum of Health (R F Fisher); Possible hepatotoxicity of zimeclidine (C N Sawyer, and others); Testing efficacy of proposed new consultant appointments (D N Baron); Dr John Bodkin Adams (P Hoskins); Personal papers (Doris Jackson); Medical care in South Africa (A Hastings); Are herbal cigarettes a health hazard? (I Redstone).. 1555**

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, who should include their degrees. Letters critical of a paper may be sent to the authors of the paper so that their reply may appear in the same issue.

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.

Skull radiology in patients with psychiatric illness

SIR,—It seems that even psychiatrists are playing “the numbers game” now. I refer to Dr Sudhir C Rastogi and Dr Brian M Barraclough (29 October, p 1259), who argue against routine x ray procedures in patients with psychiatric illness. Retrospective analysis of the yield from investigations of this sort has greatly advanced the management of head injury (22 October, p 1173), but it is questionable whether psychiatry is as reducible. I make these comments in the light of my experience of two patients investigated recently at this institute. Both presented with dementia and personality change in the presenile age group, and both were found to have meningiomas accounting for their mental state. I wish to draw attention to these cases because the meningioma, unlike many neurological conditions, is the treatable cause of psychiatric disturbance par excellence. Each patient had obvious abnormalities on plain skull x ray films and could have been diagnosed definitively by standard isotope brain scanning. Unfortunately, the diagnosis was not suspected until the tumours were very large, creating technical difficulties for the neurosurgeon.

Meningiomas are more common in psychiatric inpatients than in hospital controls¹ and

presumably contribute to their illness.² A high index of suspicion is required if these lesions are to be identified, so clinicians should not be inhibited by an apparently low return on some simple tests. If the purpose of the aforementioned paper is to tell us that “blanket” radiology is no substitute for clinical skill then it succeeds in its limited aim. Statistical audit of investigations should, however, be regarded as an adjunct to patient management and not a substitute.

Only gamblers rely on “the numbers game,” and their lack of success is proverbial.

A S DAVID

Institute of Neurological Sciences,
Southern General Hospital,
Glasgow G51 4TF

¹ Patton RB, Sheppard JA. Intracranial tumours found at autopsy in mental patients. *Am J Psychiatry* 1956;113:319.

² Avery TL. Seven cases of frontal tumour with psychiatric presentation. *Br J Psychiatry* 1971;119:19-23.

SIR,—We should like to support the findings of Dr Sudhir C Rastogi and Dr Brian M Barraclough (29 October, p 1259) that routine skull radiography is of little value in patients with psychiatric illness.

As part of a wider prospective survey we have performed skull radiographs on 57 patients referred from a psychiatric hospital with a variety of diagnoses. Findings of all of these examinations were normal. We conclude, therefore, that skull radiography is of little value in patients with psychiatric illness where there is no specific physical abnormality.

ANGUS J THOMPSON
JOHN F CALDER

Department of Diagnostic
Radiology,
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary,
Aberdeen AB9 2ZB

SIR,—Dr Sudhir C Rastogi and Dr Brian M Barraclough (29 October, p 1259) assert that computed tomography, along with other more routine radiological procedures, has little to offer in the diagnosis and management of psychiatric illness. Their small heterogeneous sample may have misled them in this respect. Computed tomography remains a new technique, and research into its proper place in psychiatry is far from completed. Dr Rastogi and Dr Barraclough argue against its use as a