

the fact that the Sheffield girl escaped by the narrowest of margins. This was almost entirely attributable to the unusual tenacity of the child's educational psychologist in initiating proceedings when the operation had already been booked to take place. Some sort of independent body (whether the Official Solicitor or the so-called "children's ombudsman") is required so that the merits of a proposed non-therapeutic sterilization can be vetted. Unfortunately no such procedure is incorporated in the Children's Bill currently before Parliament.

Above all, doctors are entitled to know where they stand on the law. At the moment there is a serious risk of actions for assault

brought by minors sterilized for non-therapeutic reasons once they reach their majority.

- 1 *The Times*, 18 September 1975.
- 2 Robert Kilroy-Silk, M.P., *The Daily Telegraph*, 18 September 1975.
- 3 D.H.S.S. figures quoted in *The Times*, 18 September 1975.
- 4 *Bravery v. Bravery*: (1954) 3 A.E.R., at page 68.
- 5 Addison, P. H., *Medico-Legal Journal*, 1967, 35, 164.
- 6 Counsel's opinion was originally taken in 1960 after the M.D.U. heard of a case where the same serious hereditary defect was transmitted to two consecutive children of the same family.
- 7 Meyers, D. W., *The Human Body and the Law*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1970.
- 8 Binney, C., *Medico-Legal Journal*, 1957, 25, 115.
- 9 *Medical Research Council Report for 1962/63*, Cmnd. 2382. London, H.M.S.O., 1964.
- 10 Speller, S. R., *Law of Doctor and Patient*. London, H. K. Lewis and Co. (1973).
- 11 Campbell, A. G. M., *British Medical Journal*, 1974, 3, 334.
- 12 Though section 8(3) Family Law Reform Act 1969 deals only with consent to treatment and not to research.
- 13 *Consent to Treatment*. London, Medical Defence Union, 1965.
- 14 *British Medical Journal*, 1973, 2, 4640.
- 15 Williams, G. L., *The Sanctity of Life and the Criminal Law*. London, Faber, 1958.
- 16 Meyers, D. W., in *The Sanctity of Life and the Criminal Law*, ed. Glanville Williams. London, Faber, 1958.
- 17 *Buck v. Bell*: (1927) 274 U.S. 200.
- 18 e.g., *Skinner v. Oklahoma*: (1942) 316 U.S. 535.
- 19 *In re Cavitt*: (1968) 157 N.W. 2d 171.
- 20 Section 1 (1) (b), Abortion Act 1967.
- 21 As long ago as 1934 the Brock Committee Report (H.M.S.O.: Cmnd. 4485) vainly urged legislative safeguards where sterilization was performed to allow institutionalized patients to be released or to avoid the transmission of hereditary defects.

## MEDICAL NEWS

### New Digoxin

From 1 October pharmacists will dispense the new formulation of digoxin tablets B.P. for all prescriptions for digoxin, whether dated before or after 1 October. Pharmacists have been asked to query all prescriptions for daily doses of over 500 µg with the doctor concerned, for the new formulation is better absorbed than the old and many patients will need adjustments to their maintenance dosage. The Department of Health suggests that reassessment of dosage is likely to be important in very old or young patients, those with impaired renal function, those with low blood potassium levels, those on diuretic therapy, and those with low absorption rates as evidenced by a current daily dose of over 500 µg.

### Specialist Groups

Information on groupings of specialists and general practitioners is being sought by the scientific committee of the Third International Congress on Group Medicine, to be held in Paris next year. The congress is interested in the work of groups of specialists and of mixed groups of specialists and general practitioners working together. Any doctor working in Britain who practises in such a group or has knowledge of one is asked to get in touch with Dr. John Marks, at the Theobald Centre, 121 Theobald Street, Boreham Wood, Herts.

### Social Effects of Oil Industry

The Social Science Research Council is to provide £90 000 for research into "the social impact of North Sea oil developments in Scotland." The decision is based on an S.S.R.C. advisory group report, published on 11 September, which recommended that the money should be allocated by a panel of senior social scientists at Scottish universities.

## COMING EVENTS

**St. Mark's Hospital for Diseases of Colon and Rectum.**—Course of lectures, mornings only, 6-10 October, London. Details and applications to Dean of Postgraduate Studies, St. Mark's Hospital, City Road, London EC1V 2PS. (Tel. 01-253 8821, ext. 36.)

**Institute of Urology.**—Symposium "Urological Malignancies," 17-18 October, London. For details see advertisement at p. xi.

**"Current Views on the Detection and Management of Hypertension."**—Symposium, 17 October, Isleworth. Details from Postgraduate Medical Centre, West Middlesex Hospital, Isleworth, Middlesex.

**West Middlesex Hospital.**—Details of the postgraduate teaching programme October to December are now available from Medical Centre Secretary, West Middlesex Hospital, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 6AF. (Tel. 01-560 2121 ext. 294.)

**Edgware Postgraduate Medical Society.**—Details of the programme of Sunday morning meetings, 1975-6, are now obtainable from the Postgraduate Administrator, Edgware Postgraduate Medical Society, Edgware General Hospital, Edgware, Middlesex. (Tel. 01-952 2381.)

## SOCIETIES AND LECTURES

### Monday, 29 September

ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF ENGLAND.—6 p.m., Mr. P. R. Hawley: Rectal Prolapse.

### Tuesday, 30 September

ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS OF LONDON.—5.35 p.m., Lumleian lecture by Dr. A. G. W. Whitfield: Ankylosing Spondylitis: Some New Facts and Hypotheses.

ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF ENGLAND.—6 p.m., Mr. D. J. Waterson: Paediatric Cardiac Surgery.

### Wednesday, 1 October

INSTITUTE OF ORTHOPAEDICS.—11 a.m., Dr. J. M. Faccini: Bone Structure; 6 p.m., Professor Keith Simpson: Medico-legal Complications of Orthopaedics.

ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF ENGLAND.—6.15 p.m., Professor I. E. Gillespie: Selection of Surgery for Peptic Ulcer.

### Thursday, 2 October

LONDON SCHOOL OF HYGIENE AND TROPICAL MEDICINE.—5 p.m., Professor H. Seeliger (University of Würzburg): Opportunistic Fungal Infections with Particular Reference to *Candida albicans*.

ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF ENGLAND.—6 p.m., Mr. R. J. Earlam: Management of Retrosternal and Epigastric Pain.

### Friday, 3 October

ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF ENGLAND.—6 p.m., Mr. D. R. Sweetnam: The Foot.

## B.M.A. NOTICES

### Diary of Central Meetings

- | OCTOBER  |   |
|----------|---|
| 1 Wed.   | Scottish Committee for Hospital Medical Service (7 Drumsheugh Gardens, Edinburgh EH3 7QP), 10.45 a.m. |
| 1 Wed.   | Liaison Committee between G.M.S. Committee and R.C.G.P., 2.30 p.m.                                    |
| 1 Wed.   | Committee on the E.E.C., 2.45 p.m.  |
| 2 Thurs. | General Purposes Subcommittee (G.M.S.), 10.30 a.m.  |
| 2 Thurs. | Hospital Junior Staff Committee, 10 a.m.  |
| 3 Fri.   | Board of Science and Education, 10.30 a.m.  |

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 7 Tues.   | Armed Forces Committee, 2 p.m.   |
| 9 Thurs.  | Scottish Council (7 Drumsheugh Gardens, Edinburgh EH3 7QP), 10.45 a.m.           |
| 16 Thurs. | General Medical Services Committee, 10 a.m.                                      |
| 16 Thurs. | Anaesthetists Subcommittee (C.C.H.M.S.), 2 p.m.                                  |
| 21 Tues.  | Joint Consultants Committee (Royal College of Surgeons, London W.C.2), 9.30 a.m. |
| 22 Wed.   | Council, 10 a.m.   |

### Branch and Division Meetings to be Held

Members proposing to attend meetings marked\* are asked to notify in advance the honorary secretary concerned.

**Blackburn Division.**—At Whalley Abbey Conference House, Thursday, 2 October, 8 for 8.15 p.m., wine tasting.\*

**City and Hackney Division and Tower Hamlets Division.**—At Hackney Hospital, Tuesday, 30 September, 1 p.m., Dr. Katharina Dalton: "Hormone Replacement Therapy" (preceded by buffet lunch at 12.30).

**Grimsby Division.**—At Humber Royal Hotel, Thursday, 2 October, 8 p.m., annual dinner.\*

**Redbridge and Stratford Division.**—At King George Hospital, Monday, 29 September, 8 p.m., a.g.m.

**Sheffield Division.**—At Nether Edge Hospital, Friday, 3 October, 8 p.m., a.g.m.

### Corrections

#### Death during Dental Anaesthesia

We regret that a printing error occurred in the letter from Dr. J. D. Hill (13 September, p. 653). The second half of the fifth sentence in the second paragraph should have read "... very high concentrations of vapour will be breathed by the patient."

#### Junior Hospital Staff Contract

In the letter from Dr. J. L. Mitchell and others (20 September, p. 707) the name of one of the signatories, Dr. H. R. Gribbin, was incorrectly spelt.

### Notice to Authors

When original articles and letters for publication are not submitted exclusively to the *British Medical Journal* this must be stated.

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