bilirubinemia in the newborn, as has been suggested. Finally, practically nothing is known about the influence of diazepam on the developing fetal brain or the developing neurological functions of the newborn. Thus we do not recommend the subchronic use of diazepam in any stage of pregnancy or in doses higher than 10-20 mg to the mother during labour. We are, etc.,

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5 Roosnell, K., Geburtshilfe und Frauenheilkunde, 1970, 30, 713.

Adverse Reactions to Intra-amniotic Urea and Prostaglandin

Sir,—Since July 1973 it has been our practice to induce mid-trimester therapeutic abortion by injection of intra-amniotic urea and prostaglandin E1 injection after amniocentesis, as described by Craft.

In the main we have found this method satisfactory, with a minimum of adverse effects. However, we here describe three cases in which adverse reactions, all of a similar nature, occurred at the time of induction of abortion.

The patients, who were 14-16 weeks pregnant, received no premedication and all passed urine and faeces within 30 minutes of the start of the procedure. The adverse reaction common to all three cases consisted of rigors, vomiting, severe abdominal pain, and an intense desire to pass urine and defaecate. There was also peripheral vasodilatation and a rapid, low-volume pulse, with hypotension in one case and peripheral cyanosis in another. In two cases, in which the liquor was clear, the lower abdominal pain followed immediately after the injection of the urea solution and preceded the injection of 5 mg of prostaglandin. In the third case, in which the liquor was blood-stained, no urea was injected and only 2 mg of prostaglandin by slow, fine drip was given; the patient corresponded, with a return to normal within one hour, to a rapid intravenous infusion of normal saline solution and promazine 10 mg, without any further symptoms. Abortion subsequently occurred. The third patient required an infusion and diazepam alone; abortion did not take place and was induced two weeks later by intra-amniotic hypertonic saline without incident.

The effects of large doses of intravenous prostaglandins are well known, and the features exhibited by the patients described could well represent the effects of a massive dose of prostaglandin introduced into the systemic circulation. This could possibly explain the phenomena in the case in which blood-stained liquor was obtained and one would advise against the use of prostaglandins or urea in such circumstances. However, in the two cases in which the liquor was clear it was more difficult to ascribe the reactions to this cause. These were the cases in which the injection of urea caused severe lower abdominal pain. One would therefore advise against the use of prostaglandins when the injection of the urea solution causes lower abdominal pain even though clear liquor was obtained at amniocentesis.

As this series of events has not to our knowledge been previously recorded, we would appreciate any details of similar cases.—We are, etc.,

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CCNU in Treatment of Recurrent Medulloblastoma

Sir,—CCNU is 1-(2-chloroethyl)-3-cyclohexyl-1-nitrosourea and is one of the nitrosoureas synthesized at the U.S. National Cancer Institute. It has an advantage over 1,3-bis (2-chloroethyl)-3-cyclohexyl-1-nitrosourea (BCNU) in that it can be given by mouth and has a higher lipid solubility. The latter property is probably an important reason why the drug can cross the blood-brain barrier effectively. CCNU has been reported to produce marked improvement in the condition of patients with glioblastoma multiforme and glioma. Hence it seemed reasonable to assess its value in children with recurrent medulloblastoma.

A 7-year-old boy presented in September 1971 with vomiting, headache, nystagmus, papilledema, and ataxia. Craniotomy and biopsy showed a differentiating medulloblastoma in the cerebellum. Megavoltage radiotherapy was given to the whole central nervous system, the spinal cord receiving 4,000 rads and the brain 4,900 and 5,400 rads over six weeks, the highest dosage being in the posterior fossa. Subsequently his condition returned to normal apart from minimal ataxia. In December 1972 he developed metastases in the leptomeninges and left parietal lobe which were proved by biopsy. These were irradiated. Intermittent treatment with cyclophosphamide and vincristine was instituted but later vincristine was substituted because vincristine caused severe constipation. There was complete relief of pain and the child returned to school. In August 1973, despite perseverance with the above chemotherapy, he developed right facial and ocular muscular palsy. On 4 August 1973 100 mg of CCNU (130 mg/m2 body surface area) was given. Three weeks later he was found to be normal and after six weeks of starting treatment both ocular and facial palsies were barely detectable. Treatment with CCNU was repeated once every six weeks. The child remained well three months after starting treatment, with no depression of the blood count or abnormality of liver function tests.

A 9-year-old girl presented in April 1971 with vomiting, headache, nystagmus, right lateral rectus palsy, and bilateral papilledema. Biopsy showed a medulloblastoma in the vermis. Megavoltage radiotherapy was given to the whole central nervous system, the spinal cord receiving 4,000 rads and the brain 4,500 rads over five weeks. Subsequently her condition returned to normal apart from slight past-pointing with the left hand. In May 1972 she developed dysphagia and weakness of the left arm. Later radiotherapy was given to the posterior fossa, amounting to 2,500 rads over five days, and intermittent treatment with vincristine and cyclophosphamide was started. A month later she was remarkably well and no neurological abnormality could be found. In March 1973 she complained of cramp and slight weakness in the legs, so vinblastine was substituted for vincristine, and later the weakness was less. On 1 September she suddenly developed severe headache and vomiting and two weeks later she was admitted with spastic dysphagia, and inability to speak. CCNU 120 mg was given via a nasogastric tube. Ten days later she was able to talk, swallow, and walk with assistance. Treatment with CCNU was repeated six weeks later. Two months after starting treatment she remained well apart from occasional loss of concentration. There was no depression of the blood count or abnormality of liver function tests.

Both these patients showed a remarkable degree of recovery after treatment with CCNU despite the fact that severe deteriora-

Lavodopa and Chronic Bronchitis

Sir,—The beneficial effect of levodopa noted by Dr. H. G. Jeffs (9 March, p. 545) has been observed previously, though it is by no means invariably. One possible mechanism to account for such a bronchialator action might be through generation of the Schiff base of derivative tetrahydropapaveroline, which is known to be a beta-adrenergic agonist.—I am, etc.,

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1 Ingvarsson, G., Nordisk Medicin, 1965, 74, 1169.

Sir,—Dr. H. G. Jeffs's interesting report (9 March, p. 545) of improvement in dyspnoea apparently due to levodopa is consistent with the results of a double-blind study on pulmonary function in patients with Parkinson's disease which showed a significant increase in expiratory flow rates during treatment with levodopa. This was attributed to improvements in motivation and akinesia, but bronchial dilation is an attractive additional explanation. However, when levodopa was given to an asthmatic with a drug-induced extrapyramidal syndrome, there was a greatly increased frequency of attacks of bronchial asthma. Clearly, further studies on the actions of levodopa in obstructive airways disease are required. Perhaps other factors such as metabolic effects of levodopa are important in patients with abnormal bronchial secretions.—I am, etc,

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