LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

A Case of Idiosyncrasy to Strychnine

Lieut. P. R. Saville, R.A.M.C., writes: The following unusual case of idiosyncrasy to strychnine may be of interest to you readers. I recently prescribed for Lieutenant A. a simpson and strychnine mixture, each dose containing 3 minutes of time. vomiting. The patient took one dose, and in fifteen minutes his face flushed, he had headaches, with beads of perspiration, and the palms of his hands felt very faint and almost collapsed. He recovered in half an hour, and came to see me later on with no ill effects other than headache. His first words were: “Was there any strychnine in my medicine?” Apparently in 1934, his doctor had prescribed a similar medicine with “not sufficient strychnine in it to harm a bird.” He then had symptoms, even more severe, and lost consciousness for ten minutes. His doctor at the time told him to avoid strychnine in the future; he omitted to tell me this. The whole of the medical inspection room staff, including myself, took doses of the same medicine and showed no ill effects.

Cost of Diphtheria Immunization

Dr. Owen Wilson (Nelson) writes: A week or two ago I heard an eminent medical broadcaster announce on the B.B.C. home transmission that “a child could be protected against diphtheria at a cost of 7d.” I looked up a manufacturer’s price-list, and found one 0.5 c.c.m. dose of A.P.T. listed at 2s. 6d. Many parents who choose to have their children treated by their own doctor must have got the impression that they are grossly overcharged. If the B.M.A. has any useful function it ought to deal with questions like this.

Radiographs of Tuberculosis Workers

Dr. Rose Jordan writes from Uckfield, Sussex: On retiring, after twenty-five years’ service as tuberculosis officer, I thought it would be of interest to see the radiological pictures of myself and my staff, six of whom had worked with me, in close contact with tuberculous patients, for periods extending from seven to twenty-one years. The results showed that, while two of the radiographs minute calcareous deposits could be seen, the remaining five showed no radiological changes whatever in the lungs. Perhaps this demonstration may be of encouragement to lay workers in the field of tuberculosis.

Surplus Copies of the Journal

The restricted consumption of paper now permitted by the Paper Control of the Ministry of Supply makes it imperative that the margin between the number of copies of the British Medical Journal printed each week and the number required for immediate domestic use be maintained. The figures will be the same as of this date. The results showed that, while all two of the radiographs minute calcareous deposits could be seen, the remaining five showed no radiological changes whatever in the lungs. Perhaps this demonstration may be of encouragement to lay workers in the field of tuberculosis.

A Newspaper’s Inquiry

Dr. E. Starling writes: I administered an anaesthetic to one of my patients who was being delivered by a midwife. On the following morning I was rung up by a provincial newspaper office and asked to confirm the birth of the child. I demurred somewhat sharply, on the grounds of professional secrecy, but was told it was “out usual custom to maintain the looseness of the figure.” I subsequently found out that the father, who called at the office in person to insert a notice in the births column, had been asked to give my name and telephone number as well as those of the midwife. I believe that finally the mother herself was called upon to confirm the announcement. I imagine that a patient’s condition after delivery is as much a matter of confidence as it is during pregnancy, and I should be glad to know whether other practitioners have had similar experiences. Neither my partner nor myself has ever been approached in this way before.

Operability of Carcinoma of Rectum: Corrigendum

We wish to correct a printer’s error which occurred in Mr. J. C. Goligher’s article in our issue of September 20. In line 21 of the second column on page 394 the phrase “while 94 had apparently inoperable growths” gave an entire reverse of the author’s meaning. The sentence should have run: “While 94 had apparently operable growths, in confirmation of operability at laparotomy was precluded, etc.”