which have an important medical component, the majority of these being in the psychiatric field.

The Samaritans were founded 21 years ago and today have nearly 150 branches in the British Isles with 18,000 volunteers. They dealt with more than 192,000 new self-referred clients in 1974. One of their great advantages is that they provide a 24-hour service and all the time their clients are in touch by telephone or face to face, without any delay. They are not experts or attached to any establishment but just ordinary men and women of all ages and social conditions who are accepted as volunteers because they have the special flair for establishing a warm, caring, and empathetic relationship which is basic to the Samaritan role. Selection, however, is strict and they are systematically prepared.

Nearly all the branches have a psychiatric consultant and a general practitioner adviser. In the many cases of depression and other psychiatric conditions their aim is always to get the client in touch with his own doctor as soon as possible and to maintain a close liaison with him—always, however, with the client's consent. Not infrequently doctors suggest to their patients that they should get in touch with the Samaritans for the special help that they can give.

Professor Aitken stresses that the clinical relationship is "the most powerful aid to relieving depression" and says, "It can be about miracles." It is this relationship, operating in many cases in conjunction with the help of medical and social services, that the Samaritans aim to provide.—I am, etc.,

DORIS ODLUM
Poole, Dorset

Treatment of Protein-losing Gastroenteropathy

Sir,—Though several possible explanations of the mechanism of excessive enteric protein loss in "protein-losing gastroenteropathy" have been made, no definite treatment for the disorder has been found. Therefore, the surgical resection of the affected digestive tract.

We have examined the gastric mucosa obtained by biopsy under fibroscope by a 25-year-old man with erosive gastritis accompanied by hypoproteinemia and increased faecal 131I-polyvinyl-pyrollidone faecal excretion and found marked elevation of the activity of "tissue activator of plasminogen" (TA). The evidence suggested the possibility that the increased fibrinolytic activity in the gastric mucosa participates in the enhancement of mucosal permeability to protein. The patient was therefore treated by oral administration of a synthetic inhibitor of plasmin, trans-4-aminoethylcyclohexane carboxylic acid (transamexacid). After morning marked elevation of the serum protein level and a reduction of the mucous membrane disorder were observed. After treatment for three months no hypoproteinemia reappeared when placebo was given.

In a 22-year-old woman with Crohn's disease, though the TA activity of the small intestine could not be examined, transamexacid again had a dramatic effect in elevating the serum protein level, with reduction in the severe watery diarrhea. In a 30-year-old man with Menetrier's disease biopsy of the gastric mucosa revealed high TA activity in parallel with a decrease in serum protein level. He underwent surgical resection of the stomach which was treated with transamexacid therapy since the presence of a submucosal tumour was suspected; this was not confirmed, however, by subsequent histological examination.

These three cases strongly support the new concept that increased TA activity, probably due to the underlying mucosal disorder, may play an important role in the pathogenesis of protein-losing gastroenteropathy. —We are, etc.,

MOTOMARU KONDO
KEMEI HOSOKAWA
MASASUKE MASUDA
Department of Medicine, Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine, Japan


Illness in the Clouds

Sir,—Your leading article (8 February, p. 295) gave a succinct review of the problem and also highlighted the predicament of those with pre-existing medical conditions who must be transported by air. It was notable from the B.O.A.C. figures that 47 of the 90 deaths were those of notified invalids. It is our experience that compliance with the conditions stated on the "medical certificate of fitness for air travel" is often taken as a protection against illness in flight.

During the past five years Transcane International has escorted 950 people on flights. Of these, 755 were on scheduled flights and 220 on ambulance flights; 170 were accompanied by a doctor and 805 by a state registered nurse. There have been no deaths in the air or later attributable to transport of the patients. It would seem that the severely ill cannot be safely transported by air provided that their condition is stabilized before the flight, that close watch is made on their condition during flight, and that any abnormality arising is immediately corrected. —I am, etc.,

R. J. FAIRHURST
Medical Officer, Transcane International
Croydon, Surrey


Heberden's Angina and Syncope Anginosus

Sir,—It is a pity that the otherwise excellent report from Drs. J. B. Irving and A. H. Kitchin (8 March, p. 555) was marred by a complete distortion of the historical perspective of ischaemic heart disease. Heberden did not describe anginosus reaction to syncope but "giddiness, confusion, stupidity, insensation, forgetfulness and illness . . . they either sink under it in a fainting fit, or it is with great efforts and struggling they can keep from it . . . ." under the heading of "hypochondriacus et hystericus affectus." The concept and the term "syncope anginosus" were described in 1799 by C. H. Parry, himself an Edinburgh graduate.

Indeed, the confusion which has existed about angina pectoris vis-à-vis syncope anginosus and the inability of generations of physicians to distinguish between these disorders have contributed to our failure in the present day to understand the pathophysiology of ischaemic heart disease as expressed by these two conditions. Heberden's angina is commonly due to the effects of obstruction to blood flow by coronary arterial athro-erosclerosis during exercise-induced tachycardia, whereas Parry's syncope anginosus is associated with reduced tissue perfusion during bradycardic dysrhythmias, as has been documented by Trouseau, Charcot, Albott, and others. It is reviewed in an account which resolves the Heberden-Parry controversy about the nature and pathogenesis of angina pectoris. Heberden's angina develops in active patients, Parry's syncope anginosus presents occasionally as intermittent claudication but more commonly in the less active elderly patient as repeated falls, fractures, sometimes strokes, and even dementia. —I am, etc.,

BRIAN LIVESLEY
Department of Medical History, King's College Hospital, London, S.E.5

Kilo-what?

Sir,—We have moved towards uneasy co-existence with kilojoules, partly because of the great opportunities for future advertising copy-writers ("a joule of a food," etc.).

We must, however, report that the kilopascal (8 February, p. 333) moved us to two apprehensive kilochapins (basic units of amusement). Let us hope that the earnest purveyors of instantaneous logic in scientific measurement do not push too high on the kilojoule scale (impossible dream units) nor likely to cause rising titres of kilohans (international units of chaos and confusion, named after the amiable 13th century Jenghiz).—We are, etc.,

DERRICK B. JELLIFE
E. PATRICE JELLIFE
School of Public Health, University of California, Los Angeles, California

Consultant Contract

Sir,—It is clear from the most recent correspondence from the British Medical Association that only one issue now lies between the consultants and the Government, that is, as the secretary of the Central Committee for Hospital Medical Services says in his most recent letter to us, "the definition of the contractual commitments of whole-time and maximum part-time consultants, and the distinction between them."

The Government has already made quite considerable efforts to define, in terms of time worked, sessional commitments of consultants, and this leaves us clear to proceed to discussion on on-call and out-of-hours payments. The issue dividing consultants from