logical findings. Forty-three cases were not x-rayed, and 10 had negative radiological findings. In contrast with this, Hutchinson's cases all had positive radiological findings.

We have studied 415 infants with respiratory distress since August 1963. Of these, 24 had rarer causes of respiratory distress such as distonic hernia and pneumothorax, 18 died from other causes, and 59 were not x-rayed. Of the remaining 314 cases 150 had radiographs which were normal or showed only localized areas of atelectasis, and the mortality in these cases was only 2%. The three deaths all being in infants of less than 28 weeks' gestation. The good prognosis in these cases shows the necessity of excluding them from studies of the effects on mortality of different methods of treatment.

In your leading article, in discussing treatment of the respiratory distress syndrome with alkalis, you say that "further studies are required to determine the precise effects of these substances and the best way of giving them." We have carried out a study of the effects of intragastric sodium bicarbonate in the respiratory distress syndrome and our findings are to be published.1 We found a mortality of 31% in 69 cases given intragastric sodium bicarbonate, and 39% in 69 cases given early milk feeds. These mortality figures are higher than those reported by Abraham and Brown, but refer only to what we regard as positive radiological findings, and are therefore more strictly comparable with the mortality figures quoted by Hutchinson et al.

We would agree with the view expressed in your leading article that measures directed towards the relief of hypoxia have more effect in lowering mortality in the respiratory distress syndrome than correction of metabolic acidosis alone.—We are, etc.,

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REFERENCES
2 Stoneman, M. E. R., and Owens, R. M., Arch.

PROBLEM OF UNUSED DRUGS

SIR,—I was interested to read the article "Collection of Unwanted Drugs from Private Homes" by Dr. W. A. Nicholson (16 September, p. 730). It is extremely difficult for each individual practitioner to gain any control over this mounting problem. However, I think it is worth mentioning an extremely simple technique which gives the doctor a small measure of control in some cases and which I am surprised is not used by many of my colleagues. Quite simply, each patient is asked to bring his supply of medicines with him to each consultation. A great number of patients are willing to co-operate in this way and the prescriber is thus enabled to determine the number of doses required until the next visit.

Using this method, it is surprising how often one meets the patient who says he is taking his tablets regularly but who in fact brings stock bottles which indicate the contrary. This discrepancy can be used as a valuable point about the role which the medications are playing in the patient's life and the treatment of his illness. In addition, when he sees all the medicines together, the doctor is reminded of the complex regimen he sometimes asks a patient to undertake and can adjust his prescribing habits accordingly.

I realize that a determined saver of tablets for suicidal purposes will not be influenced by such a mild appeal, but a number of patients can be spared the risk of having large quantities of dangerous chemicals in their households.—I am, etc.,

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Visual Hallucinations in Cranial Arteritis

SIR,—With reference to the communication of Mr. C. T. Hart (9 September, p. 643) it may be of interest to mention a personal series of 67 cases of giant-celled arteritis of the aged (which name, despite opposition, I still consider preferable) there have been three in whom formed visual hallucinations were a prominent symptom, and it would seem that this symptom may not be a particularly uncommon characteristic of what is fundamentally an extremely pleomorphic condition.

None of these patients developed signs related to the external visual apparatus, possibly owing to the institution of early treatment. One patient in particular was most striking, being an 85-year-old widowed housekeeper in a very good state of mental preservation who was extremely distressed by the continuous appearance of men's