specific infection, seems a convincing argument for routine testing by general practitioners of the sexually-active women on their lists. Even if a large majority of women examined should prove to be free from any form of genitonal infection, routine screening programmes—wherever carried out—offer the only means of eventually controlling sexually-transmitted disease.—We are, etc.,

S. SELwyn
J. K. OATES
Westminster Medical School and Hospital, London SW1.

Diagnosis of Appendicitis

Str,—I was interested in the simple and practical points made by G. D. F. McFadden (13 November, p. 430) mentions in connexion with the diagnosis of appendicitis. But he states that he has failed to see in print that coughing often causes pain in acute appendicitis. In recent editions of Short Practice of Surgery this test has been described, and in the last edition reference is made on page 984.

The other points mentioned in the letter are also very useful guides in the diagnosis of acute appendicitis.—I am, etc.,

McNEILL LOVE
Brickendon, Hertford

Cavernous Chylangiomata of Jejunal Mesentery

Str,—Mr. E. S. Field's account (3 April, p. 27) reminds me of a girl of 12 whom I explored in 1961 for suspected appendicitis. A loop of plum-coloured, fibrin-coated ileum had to be resected as it was clearly in jeopardy. The related mesentery was a mass of chylous vessels which were obstructing venous drainage. On opening the bowel, the mucosa was remarkable, white papillary surface like the head of a cauliflower—the engorged villi were visible to the naked eye. Also! Ill-advised deep-freezing spoiled the specimen for postery, but the appearances still seem worth recording.—I am, etc.,

A. C. BRANFOOT
Department of Morbid Anatomy, Westminster School of Medicine, University of London, London SW1.

The Lungs in Ankylosing Spondylitis

Str,—Your leading article (28 August, p. 492) now accepts upper lobe fibrosis as an occasional feature of this systemic disorder. It would be premature to assume that this is part of the primary pathological process in view of the non-specific lung histology. Furthermore, such fibrosis is not necessarily of ominous significance, since in one case I reported bilateral upper lobe fibrosis has existed for 21 years with little pulmonary disability except for an intercurrent aspergillosis.

Manometric studies have shown a very high incidence of impaired oesophageal motor function in patients with ankylosing spondylitis. One may speculate that these may predispose to aspiration pneumonitis, especially in the upper lobes, where mechanical ventilation is defective. The association of such pulmonary abnormalities and ankylosing spondylitis calls for a careful radiographic and manometric assessment of oesophageal motor function, even when symptoms do not point to a primary oesophageal disorder.—I am, etc.,

B. A. SCOBIE
Gastroenterology Unit, Wellington Hospital, Wellington, New Zealand

Diazoxide and Hypertension

Str,—Over the past five years intravenous diazoxide has been our first choice for the emergency treatment of severe hypertension not related to renal failure. We confirm the satisfactory results now reported by Drs. J. E. F. Pohl and H. Thurston (16 October, p. 142). Since these authors presented their work at the Medical Research Society we have also used diazoxide orally for long-term management. It has been given to patients suffering from severe renovascular hypertension, many of whom had severe postural hypotension while on treatment with conventional hypotensive agents. By using diazoxide in addition to methyldopa and or bendithine it has been possible to control output of a small dose (100-200 mg daily) and we have not so far encountered hyperglycaemia requiring tolbutamide therapy. With this combination it has been possible to reduce the dose of methyldopa and bendithine and thereby reduce the incidence of side effects.—We are, etc.,

L. H. SEVITT
D. K. PETERS
Department of Medicine, Royal Postgraduate Medical School, London W12

Anticoagulant Interactions

Str,—May I be allowed to clarify some points of detail in the leading article (16 October, p. 128) “Anticoagulant Interactions”? The question of chloral hydrate-warfarin interactions is at present very much debated. Sellers and Koch-Weser's work indicated that a chloral hydrate metabolite, trichloroacetic acid, and not chloral hydrate itself caused warfarin displacement from albumin binding sites. A similar chloral hydrate interaction or potential interaction of warfarin has now been reported by Weiner, though this observation was made only on a single patient.

Recently, however, several groups of workers have failed to observe any potentiating effect of warfarin by chloral hydrate.5,6 Griner and his co-workers stating that the clinical significance of any interaction between warfarin and chloral hydrate is negligible for patients receiving long-term therapy with warfarin under the conditions of this study. The last few words of this statement are perhaps the most significant. Sellers and Koch-Weser have countered these results by asserting that the potentiation occurs soon after chloral hydrate administration and will only be transient, but still of clinical significance.

One interesting factor which arises in comparing these studies is that Sellers and Koch-Weser's work was carried out using healthy volunteers, while the authors who failed to observe any potentiating effect of warfarin by chloral hydrate carried out their studies on patients who were already receiving long-term warfarin therapy for various conditions. The single case observed by Weiner does, however, fail to fit this pattern.

The fatal haemorrhage which Cucinell et al. suggested was caused by chloral hydrate reducing the anticoagulant effect was observed with a combination of chloral hydrate and bis-hydroxycoumarin. Here there is always the possibility of a different mechanism of interaction.—I am, etc,

P. F. COOPER
Uxbridge, Middx

Hazards of Colostomy Closure

Str,—Your leading article on the “Hazards of Colostomy Closure” (13 November, p. 380) offers much needed wisdom on this procedure, which is all too often regarded as easy and safe when compared with resection of the colon. May I draw your attention to another hazard of colostomy closure which can be disastrous; this is the development of postoperative infective diarrhoea. Patients who have previously had no such trouble may develop this owing to the activation of organisms present in the bowel at the time of operation. The most dangerous of these in our experience in Clostridium welchi. To prevent these hazards a swab should be taken from colostomies prior to closure, or a routine single dose of penicillin given on the day of operation.—I am, etc,

G. T. WATTS
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Hamster-hair Hypersensitivity

Str,—May I suggest that the onset of asthma in Dr. J. A. Wilson's Case 3 (6 November, p. 341), as well as the failure to improve when the hamsters were removed, was due to coincidental disease of the adrenals. Dr Green and I reported two patients with Addison's disease who presented with asthma, and postulated that their asthmatic tendency had been unmasked by deteriorating adrenal cortical function.

The "striking adrenal cortical atrophy" found at necropsy may have been due to Addison's disease rather than to cortico-