LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Thyroid disorders—an update

EDITOR,—I would like to make the following comments in relation to the review by Lazarus and Obuobie¹:

(1) Contrary to what is stated in table 5 (possibly a typographical error), corticosteroids suppress thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH), not only in pharmacological doses,² but also in the context of excessive endogenous cortisol secretion exemplified by Cushing's syndrome.³

(2) Among predictors of relapse after thionamide treatment of Graves' disease,¹ the serum IgE concentration appears to be a promising modality, given the recent documentation of a relationship between IgE and autoantibodies against TSH receptor,⁴ furthermore, after thionamide medication, patients with Graves' disease who have raised pretreatment IgE were significantly less likely to undergo remission (35.5% *v* 64.4%; *p*<0.002), than counterparts with normal pretreatment levels. Relapse rates (18.2% *v* 5.3%) tended to be higher in patients with raised pretreatment IgE but this comparison did not reach statistical significance.⁵ Larger studies might define these differences more accurately.

(3) Congenital hypothyroidism, to which allusion was made in the review,¹ has also been the topic of recent research. A comparison of the feedback setpoint for free thyroxine modulation of serum TSH during replacement therapy in children aged <1 year compared with older counterparts showed higher prevalence of TSH resistance to thyroxine mediated feedback control (43% *v* 10%) in the younger age group. This resistance diminished with age.⁶ The molecular basis for setpoint maturation will be the most exciting focus of research for decades to come.

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¹ Lazarus JH, Obuobie K. Thyroid disorders—an update. *Postgrad Med J* 2000;76:529–36.

- 2 Otsuki M, Dakoda M, Baba S. Influence of glucocorticoids on TRF-induced TSH response in man. *J Clin Endocrinol Metab* 1973;36:95–102.
- 3 Duick DS, Wahner HW. Thyroid axis in patients with Cushing's syndrome. *Arch Intern Med* 1979;139:767–72.
- 4 Sato A, Takemura Y, Yamada T, *et al.* A possible role of immunoglobulin E (IgE) in patients with hyperthyroid Graves' disease. *J Clin Endocrinol Metab* 1999;84:3602–5.
- 5 Yamada T, Sato A, Komiya I, *et al.* An elevation of serum immunoglobulin E provides a new aspect of hyperthyroid Graves' disease. *J Clin Endocrinol Metab* 2000;85:2775–8.
- 6 Fisher DA, Schoen EJ, La Franchi S, *et al.* The hypothalamic-pituitary-thyroid negative feedback control axis in children with treated congenital hypothyroidism. *J Clin Endocrinol Metab* 2000;85:2722–7.

Dr Lazarus responds:

(1) The criticism is correct and was in fact a typographical error.

(2) Although there have been data published about IgE and its role in possible prediction of relapse and remission of Graves' disease, it is not thought that there was enough substantive evidence to include this as a definitive management statement in this article.

(3) We agree that the feedback setpoint in children is of interest. However, this review was not designed to discuss the management of thyroid failure in the newborn but rather to point to advances in the appreciation of the diagnosis. Discussion of the management could be extensive and was not the aim of this review.

BOOKS RECEIVED

The receipt of these books is acknowledged and this listing must be regarded as sufficient return for the courtesy of the sender. Books that appear to be of particular interest will be reviewed, space permitting. The journal does not publish unsolicited reviews.

Localization of Brain Lesions and Developmental Functions. Edited by D Riva and A Benton. John Libbey & Co, 2000 (165 pp). ISBN 0-86196-599-X.

Preoperative Care of the Eye Patient. By Gilli Vafidis, P Neville Robinson, and George M Hall. BMJ Books, 2000 (£9.95; 70 pp). ISBN 0-7279-1225-9.

Anaesthesia for Obstetrics & Gynaecology. Edited by Robin Russell. BMJ Books, 2000 (369 pp). ISBN 0-7279-1276-3.

Learning Medicine. By Peter Richards. BMJ Books, 2000 (£12.95; 141 pp). ISBN 0-7279-1462-6.

Update for the MRCP 2. By T Andrews, P Arlett, B Brett, and R Jones. Churchill Livingstone, 2000 (295 pp). ISBN 0-443-06257-9.

Radiology for the MRCP. By Jeremy Hughes, Michael Hughes, and Iain D Lyburn. Churchill Livingstone, 2000 (221 pp). ISBN 0-443-06041-X.

DIARY

6th European Forum on Quality Improvement in Health Care

29–31 March 2001: Bologna, Italy
Details: BMA/BMJ Conference Unit, BMA House, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JP, UK (tel: +44 (0) 20 7383 6409, fax: +44 (0) 20 7383 6869, email: Quality@bma.org.uk, web site: quality.bmjpg.com).

5th Annual Conference on Self Directed Learning in General Practice

24 April 2001: London, UK
Organised by the Open Learning Unit, University College London, and sponsored by the *British Medical Journal*. The conference will be organised around the themes of:

- Revalidation
- Web based learning resources for self directed learning.

The day will be based around small group workshops, with some offering hands-on training in the use of online learning resources. Places will therefore be strictly limited and allocated on a first come, first served basis. For further details please contact Marcia Rigby on m.rigby@ucl.ac.uk, tel +44 (0)20 7288 3246, +44 (0)20 7281 8004. A web site is in preparation.