Correspondence

SIR—The article on listerial infection in infants (*Postgraduate Medical Journal*, 48, 663) mentions the problem of identification and confusion of listeria.

It should perhaps be emphasized that the symptoms and spinal fluid changes are similar in listeria and tuberculous meningitis and that both organisms may be present in mixed infections. Seeliger (1961), who quoted the above reference, also points out that infection with *Listeria monocytogenes* has been mistaken for tuberculous meningitis and anti-tuberculous therapy undertaken.

Harper & Howells state in your article that, 'in the U.S.A. listeriosis in man is not rare but rarely recognized'. This very probably holds true in this country. Seeliger noted in Germany (1961) that listeriosis is most common in rural areas and particularly amongst those whose occupation brings them into frequent contact with animals.

If the diagnosis of listeriosis is considered, it is likely that more cases will be diagnosed and successfully treated. Barber & Okubadejo (1968) considered that the organism remained 'a baffling microbe'. Its pathogenicity is unclear but may be related to impaired immunity. In 1968, six cases diagnosed over a 2-year period were reported from a

general hospital. Two of these patients were on steroids, one had a carcinoma, one sarcoidosis, one diabetes and the sixth was hypertensive (Ford, Herzberg & Ford, 1968).

If impaired immunity is indeed important, then the widespread use of steroids, cytotoxic agents and radiotherapy may lead to an increase in the frequency of the disease.

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- FORD, P.M., HERZBERG, L. & FORD, S.E. (1968) *Listeria monocytogenes*. *Quarterly Journal of Medicine*, 37, 146, 281.
- SEELIGER, H.P.R., MEYER, V.F. & EYER, H. (1961) *Listeriosis*. Hafner Publishing Co., New York.

(We have shown this letter to Dr Harper and Dr Howells, who have no further comment to make)

Books received

- Occasional Papers*, 2, 3 and 4 (*Mental Retardation*). By KENNETH S. HOLT, SHEILA HEWETT, ELSPETH STEPHEN and JEAN ROBERTSON. Pp. 172, illustrated. London: Butterworths, 1973. £2.50.
- Digital Filters (Computers in Medicine Series)*. By MARTIN H. ACKROYD. Pp. 82, illustrated. London: Butterworth, 1973. £1.95.
- The Challenge of Life*. Edited by ROBERT M. KUNZ and HANS FEHR. Proceedings of the Roches Anniversary Symposium held in Basel in September 1971. Pp. 456, illustrated. Basel: F. Hoffmann-La Roche and Co. Ltd (Birkhauser Verlag), 1972. £4.20.
- Nutrition and Diabetes Mellitus. Proceedings of the 6th Capri Conference*. Edited by E. RUDOLPH FROESCH and JOHN YUDKIN. Pp. 687, illustrated. Milan: Casa Editrice 'Il Ponte', 1972. No price stated.
- Clinical Pharmacology*. By PAUL TURNER and ALAN RICHENS. Pp. 246, illustrated. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1973. £1.25.

- Occupational Health Practice*. Edited by R. S. F. SCHILLING. Pp. 466, illustrated. London: Butterworths, 1973. £4.50.
- The Kidney*. By JAN BROD. Pp. 740, illustrated. London: Butterworths, 1973. £28.00

New editions

- Books and Periodicals for Medical Libraries in Hospitals*. Fourth Edition. Compiled by the LIBRARY ASSOCIATION. Pp. 53. London: The Library Association, Medical Section, 1973. £1.00.
- Cancer Chemotherapy*. By EDWARD S. GREENWALD. Second Edition. Pp. 464, illustrated. London: Henry Kimpton Publishers, 1973. £4.50.
- A Short Textbook of Surgery*. By SIR CHARLES ILLINGWORTH. Ninth Edition. Pp. 307, illustrated. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1972. £5.00.