

undertake to sponsor this study and publish the results in our *Journal*.

IBRAHIM S. AYOUB

McDermott Dubai,
P.O. Box 3098,
Dubai.

REFERENCE

Taylor, J. W. (1976). *British Medical Journal*, **1**, 960.

INVESTIGATIONS IN GENERAL PRACTICE

Sir,

With Dr Evans letter (April *Journal*) I partly agree, and partly disagree. I omitted the haemoglobinometer and the microscope as being too obvious. They are both in constant use, the former mostly by our own practice nurses, the latter perhaps not so much as it would be if we did not have an excellent laboratory in close proximity with a daily delivery service. I would disagree with the statement that the "situation exists when the satisfaction of fully treating one's own patients is becoming a luxury which few doctors can afford". For instance, if Dr Evans would take down his sigmoidoscope from his cupboard, he would be able to diagnose and treat his own cases of proctitis (not such a very uncommon disease) and monitor their progress. Furthermore, in our area, no case is accepted for barium enema without prior sigmoidoscopy, so that this important investigation would be denied us without a sigmoidoscope, in my view quite correctly.

I think that in these days when most general practitioners have access to an almost full range of diagnostic facilities, no case should be presented to a consultant at outpatients without having first been fully "worked up". The consultant can then perform his proper function for consultation with all the apparently relevant facts available to him at the time.

P. D. HOOPER

The Dower House,
27 Pyle Street,
Newport, PO30 1JR.
Isle of Wight.

REFERENCE

Evans, J. W. (1976). *Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners*, **26**, 261.

CONVERTING MEDICAL RECORDS

Sir,

Dr Acheson's clear and concise paper on converting medical records to A4 size in general practice (April *Journal*) is a useful exposition of possible procedures to be used in carrying out this exercise, and the figures which he has collected and the costings he has calculated will undoubtedly be useful to colleagues contemplating a similar venture.

There is obviously no single right or wrong way of approaching the problem of converting records from the conventional envelopes to A4 size folders.

In the current economic climate it is regrettably likely that it will be many years before conversion can be undertaken generally, and it is all the more important that those who are in the fortunate position of being able to carry this through should report and discuss the procedures used and difficulties encountered.

In our own practice, where conversion is proceeding at a much slower and *ad hoc* rate and is still far from complete, we depart from Dr Acheson's procedure in one fundamental and rather important way, and that is that we ask the clerical staff to file hospital records and reports in chronological order in the folder and only then does the doctor look through them to "cull" redundant material. This also gives the doctor (if he so wishes) the opportunity to summarise the contents of the record, which in many cases adds immeasurably to its value. This does incidentally mean that the doctor time involved is considerably in excess of that quoted by Acheson. The virtue, it would seem to us, of "culling" after, rather than before, placing the documents in the folder is that once they are in a folder it is so much easier to see the whole story as it develops in order to decide what material is redundant and what should be kept.

It is our view that while the opportunity provided by converting records to collect research data may be important, it is even more important that such an opportunity is taken to extract and summarise data for each individual patient with the hoped-for objective of improving individual patient care.

J. CORMACK

Ladywell Medical Centre,
Corstorphine,
Edinburgh, EH12 7TB.

REFERENCE

Acheson, H. W. K. (1976). *Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners*, **26**, 277-281.

OLD REMEDIES

Sir,

Dr Thomson's fascinating article on herbs that heal (May *Journal*), reminds me of the old lady who showed me her healed varicose ulcers last month. All efforts by both doctors and nurses had left her ulcers as large as ever, but after the application of *honeycombs*, successful skin cover was achieved.

Perhaps we have here a subject for clinical research?

ERIC BLOOMFIELD

St James Health Centre,
St James Street,
Walthamstow, E17 7NH.

REFERENCE

Thomson, W. A. R. (1976). *Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners*, **26**, 365-370.

DISABLED LIVING FOUNDATION

Sir,

I would like to remind your readers of the work of