

became impossible to obtain batteries.

A portable ECG is just the job for general practice—especially as it no longer weighs 60 lb. What it will do for you is:

1. Teach you cardiology
2. Relieve the tedium of the common run of trivialities
3. Give you a valuable collection of unusual tracings
4. Provide material for an M.D. thesis, which should be the aim of every member and associate of the College.

But it will not make money for you. It will not repay its fantastic cost—at least mine never did. Nor will it deflect your patients from the consultant. People like to be examined by the Great I AM. It flatters their vanity and increases their sense of importance. But you can profit from this too, by getting tips from the Great Man yourself.

East Meon, Hampshire.

FREWEN MOOR.

Medical representatives and the general practitioner

Sir,

The enthusiasm shown by Dr Jaffe for medical representatives (*J. Coll. gen. Practit.*, 1966, 12, 348) might be diminished if he would undertake the simple task of date stamping a card for each drug firm when he sees their representative. I have a collection of 43 such cards but I am sure that if I lived nearer the city I would be visited by many more representatives. If the briefest note of the subjects discussed is added then it becomes very obvious when, for example, there are six consecutive attendances solely to extol the virtues of one brand of penicillin.

There is a great deal of time-wasting repetition in the visits of some representatives. It is most helpful to have factual evidence on this accumulating in a card index. It is then much easier to decide whom to see and how long to allow them.

Innerleithen, Peeblesshire.

ALLEN T. WILSON.

Coloured tags on record cards for important disease groups

Sir,

In this practice we are using these coloured tags for important disease groups but I feel strongly that another group should be mentioned, namely, patients suffering from a long term or chronic illness or disability which may become dangerous and not require maintenance therapy, e.g. congenital heart lesion, dystrophia myotonica.

This point was illustrated recently when a new patient joined us. Her notes made no reference to the fact that she suffered from a mild degree of dystrophia myotonica and I referred her to hospital for a simple gynaecological operation from which she died. This might not have happened if I had been aware of the disability. A similar thing could happen to a patient with a congenital heart lesion having a dental extraction but the tag would remind one to give penicillin cover.

I suggest that new colours be introduced for these diseases, say, pink, hot orange or tartan!

Nantwich.

O. HUGH BLACKLAY.