spread over a period of weeks or months. List available from *Federation* or *College headquarters.*

Intensive courses

Applications in writing for places on these courses should be made to the *Secretary, British Postgradute Medical Federation, 18 Guilford Street, London, W.C.1.* unless otherwise indicated.

Weekend courses and one-day conferences

Applications for places on these courses and conferences should be made to the hospital or centre, unless otherwise indicated.

University of Oxford

Programmes of attendance on hospital and public health practice, for one or two weeks, are arranged to suit practitioners' individual requirements. Doctors eligible under Section 48 of the N.H.S. Act (1946) may claim expenses from the Ministry of Health for attendance at these courses. Whole-time or part-time clinical attachments in particular departments can sometimes be arranged. Special arrangements are made for doctors who have not been practising for a period and now wish to return to active work.

Applications for clinical attachments including resident obstetric attachments will be considered.

Enquiries to the *Director of Postgraduate Medical Studies, University of Oxford, Osler House, 43 Woodstock Road, Oxford.*

University of Reading

October 1968 – March 1969	*Vocational training course for general practice.*
December 4	*Approach to the psychiatric patient*—DR D. C. WATT *General practitioner car service*—DR C. B. FLOYD *The Royal College of General Practitioners*—DR S. J. CARNE, and DR W. G. TAIT
December 11	*Depression and its treatment* *Finance and accounts*—MR J. WYATT *Practice premises*—DRS B. L. E. C. REEDY, T. I. STEWART, J. M. R. IRVING

Correspondence

Infant deaths

Sir,

Following the investigation of sudden, unexpected deaths in infants in Salford during 1965, reported on p. 359 of Journal No. 76, a study has been made of similar deaths occurring in the 12 months July 1967 to June 1968. Of a total of 15 such deaths, 14 were followed up by health visitors. Each death was matched for sex, social class and birthday by a surviving child whose family was studied in a similar way.

The important points found in the 1965 study were confirmed. This

particularly applies to the existence of family problems, the illness of the child in the 14 days before death, and the separation of the mother from the father at the time of the child's death. Problems were present in 12 of the families compared with five of the controls. In 12 families too, some abnormality was noted in the infants during the two weeks before death or recalled at interview compared with five of the controls. Seven of the 14 mothers were separated from the father at the time of the infant's death—no exact comparison with the control group is possible, but only one of the mothers in it was living on her own.

These findings give further support to the need for more detailed investigation of the social factors surrounding these largely unexplained deaths.

D. H. VAUGHAN.

Department of social and preventive medicine,
Manchester, M13, OJJ.

To be taken as directed

Sir,

I was interested in the article by M. S. Gatley, in your *Journal* of July 1968. Whilst most of us realize how irregularly many of our patients take prescribed medication and it is worth emphasizing this fact again, it would have been of greater interest had Dr Gatley described the conditions for which the medication was prescribed and the results of treatment.

One wonders whether the traditional frequency and duration of dosage of many drugs is really based on sound therapeutic knowledge. To the patient the omission of doses and the early cessation of treatment may seem entirely reasonable if his symptoms have been relieved and very often this will be synonymous with cure of his condition. It, of course, behoves the doctor to urge his patients very strongly to continue medication in those cases where continuation despite the absence of symptoms is medically indicated.

Perhaps a similar trial to evaluate the outcome of a few common illnesses according to the reliability with which the medication is taken and the duration for which it is taken, might indicate that many traditional courses of therapy are of higher dosage and longer duration than is therapeutically necessary.

C. BRIDGES-WEBB.

Research Fellow,
Australian College of General Practitioners.