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Correspondence

Keeping an open mind

Sir,

The well reasoned article by Dr Reichenfeld (October *Journal*) demonstrates yet again that illness is often multifactorial and emphasises the necessity to compose (rather than ‘make’ diagnoses in physical, psychological and social terms. If this is done always it is unlikely that symptomatic ‘diagnoses’ will ever be accepted as other than a temporary categorisation.

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Mouth to mouth respiration

Sir,

May I please challenge Dr Norah Schuster’s surprising last two sentences in her (otherwise splendid) article on the Royal Humane Society (November *Journal*)? She wrote about mouth to mouth artificial respiration for the drowned:

“The Red Cross Society now teach no other method of revival in their ordinary classes for the public. It remains to be seen whether this disagreeable, rather difficult operation requiring a certain skill, great blowing power by the donor, and almost two pairs of hands to get adequate ventilation, can continue to be universal to the exclusion of all forms of first aid for the drowned.”

Now let us look at this bit by bit:

(1) “The Red Cross teach no other method”,

indeed they do. See pp. 69–71 of their official Manual, and pp. 12 and 13 of their Junior Manual and p. 27 of their *ABC of First Aid*. The alternative Sylvester is taught here as part of the routine course. In the new editions about to appear the Holger Nielsen will be featured again in detail.

- (2) “Disagreeable”. This is a matter of opinion. Anyway, agreeableness is not a factor when it comes to assessing the best method of life saving.
- (3) “Difficult”. This is far less a matter of opinion. Children and the simple minded everywhere have mastered it rapidly.
- (4) “Requiring skill”. Almost anything worth while requires skill, but this method has so much simplicity that skill plays a minor part. Understanding it is the major factor.
- (5) “Great blowing power by the donor”. Heaven forbid! This is exactly what should be avoided and the text books all stress this very strongly. Just look them up!
- (6) “Almost two pair of hands”. The method is for one pair of hands exactly and is described as such. I can add from my own experience and from observation of the experience of hundreds of others, successfully executed as such.

It seems a shame to denigrate the mouth to mouth. To the informed, it is the best life saver of the bunch.

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