

graduate education which many general practitioners receive (at any rate in therapeutics) is from the representatives, advertisements and mailed notices of the pharmaceutical firms. To return to Mr Levin's suggestion that the latter should rely less upon traditional methods of communication and more upon postgraduate medical centres, may I, in turn, make two further suggestions that he and his colleagues might consider?

First, pharmaceutical companies must make a much clearer distinction between promotion and their role, *faute de mieux*, as educators of general practitioners in therapeutics. Secondly, to achieve this (and at the same time to build up a great deal of goodwill in the profession), they should spend much more of their funds on genuine educational projects, such as supporting medical centres and sponsoring symposia, and much less on promotion.

For those of us who hold a deep conviction about the potentiality of the Health Service and the great contribution which good general practice can make to the well-being of the community, it is sad to recognise that the pharmaceutical industry is the only part of the medical scene which is financially solvent. The difficulties of obtaining financial support for research and for the pioneering of new ventures contrasts starkly with the apparent ease with which small companies spring up to copy drugs made and developed by other companies, and the lavish expenditure of nearly all companies on mailing advertisements, visits by representatives, colourful but biased films and luncheon parties at which the latter are presented.

IAN GREGG

Roehampton,  
London.

#### REFERENCES

- Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners* (1971). Editorial, 509-10.  
Levin, R. (1972). *Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners*, 22, 124-5.

#### The handedness of Kerrs

Sir,

I was intrigued by the account in *The Times* of the left handedness of the Kerrs and the Carrs. In 1936 when in Scotland I visited Ferniehurst Castle where the steps in the towers went clockwise to accommodate the left handed sword defence of the Kerr owners.

In 1951 I became aware of the general anti-clockwise movement throughout the animal world. It appears to be more usual for movement to be made in this direction than otherwise. I first noticed the ring-making propensities of roe deer and have many pictures of these rings, which usually show by the lie of the grass or other features that the running was from left to right. Later I discovered that animals in circuses, animals working eastern water pumps, certain types of mating spiders, birds circling in an aviary, natives dancing at a Corroboree, humans entering a bank by swing doors or dancing in a ballroom, mating

hedgehogs and snail shells also show the same feature. I sought a solution.

At present, the molecular structure of muscle—DNA helix—might suggest a reason. It does not explain, however, why some animals and climbing plants do the reverse. Experiments done for me at a primary school showed that in the earliest stages of school life children circle in ring games clockwise, but as they get older the percentage that become anti-clockwise reaches about 90 per cent.

Another intriguing discovery was made during the boring of the sea floor in the Pacific. The molluscs in the first 50,000 years or so showed anti-clockwise shells; carbon dating showed that the next 50 or so years showed a mixture, then all shells went clockwise. The 'mixture' period was associated with a loss of polarity of the earth. Then with magnetism at nil the magnetic field fails to blanket the effects of cosmic rays. Possibly there is a mutation at work.

I have been collecting such information for many years, but I never dreamed that I might find a relationship in the twist of the umbilical cord. I will get this looked at in deer. I would think there is some fundamental explanation and I continue to look for supporting evidence.

F. J. TAYLOR PAGE,  
*National Secretary,*  
The British Deer Society

The Deer Museum,  
Lower Hay Bridge,  
Bouth-by-Ulverston,  
Lancashire.

#### REFERENCE

- Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners* (1971). Editorial, 21, 693-4.

#### College of General Practitioners—1845

Sir,

The following article in a copy of *The Lancet* dated 20 September, 1845 has interested me and may be relevant to the problems of today. It was extracted from the *Pharmaceutical Journal* of the same month:

"The College of General Practitioners—The proposed new college has been shorn of its chief power and dignity. Medicine and surgery are cut off, midwifery is struck out, and nothing remains but a new Society of Apothecaries, an institution which can confer no degrees in what are termed the higher branches of practice. The licentiates are to have the power of recovering charges for drugs, like other tradesmen, and the standing they are to enjoy is such, that they will have not inducement to waive this privilege from notions of professional dignity. We doubt very much whether the general practitioners themselves will be contented to accept the degrading position thus offered them. We believe the opinion is gaining ground that the medical profession would be raised in character and respectability by becoming disconnected from the trading functions hitherto blended with it, and in effecting this separation, the only point on