

Table 2. Rates of highest-rate partners compared with lowest-rate partners.

	Practice rate	Rate of two lowest-rate partners (A)	Decrease on practice rate (%)	Rate of two highest-rate partners (B)	Difference between A and B (%)
Episode rate per person on list	2.0	1.7	15	2.1	19
Consultation rate per person on list	3.2	2.9	9.3	3.5	17
Patient/consulting rate per person on list	0.67	0.63	6	0.71	11
Episode rate per person under four years old	2.9	2.5	3	3.4	23

When change does occur, if it is indeed desirable, I believe doctors may have to give up some of their archaic 'priestly mantle', which presumes a right and even an ability to be seen to cure.

I believe patients may have to change and come to accept the limitations of medicine and to accept greater autonomy and independence.

Finally, I would like to know if any of your readers have any data which show how the certificate strike some years ago, which according to the DHSS produced the lowest seasonal certified sickness rate for many years, affected their consultation rates.

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References

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Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, Royal College of General Practitioners and the Department of Health and Social Security (1974). *Morbidity Statistics from General Practice. Second National Study 1970-71.* London: HMSO.

PRACTICE ORGANIZATION

Sir,
The practice organization committee of the North of England Faculty has

conducted a five-year study of work-handling in eight practices. Great variation was found in the size of practice staff, the degree of delegation to nurses, health visitors and midwives, the demands made by patients and the doctors' responses to them. One practice differed widely from the rest in its use of hospital services. The only change in organization over the five-year period was an increase in the issue of repeat prescriptions.

The range of organization observed was so wide that no ideal standard could be described, and it was concluded that practice organization is not suitable material for comparative auditing. Practice organization represents an equilibrium: a balance between the social attitudes of patients to medicine and what might be termed 'style' on the part of the doctor. Although many factors must influence both sides of this equilibrium, it appears to be stable.

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EARLY DIAGNOSIS OF PREGNANCY

Sir,
May I be permitted two clinical comments on the paper on the early diagnosis of pregnancy (*June Journal*, p. 335)?

The breast changes of pregnancy are not described in the paper, and the only reference is to "tender, tingling breasts" which is in the nature of a symptom. The physical signs might well have been described as prominent veins,

enlargement and pigmentation of the areolae and nipples with the appearance of Montgomery's tubercles. These changes do not regress, of course, and are therefore of less value to multiparae. However, one now sees the breast changes of pregnancy in nulliparous girls who have been taking the oral contraceptive pill, so that it is no longer a reliable physical sign of pregnancy.

Secondly, there is no mention that systolic murmurs are common in pregnancy and are a useful confirmatory sign. This is mentioned in Greenhill's book on obstetrics and other authors state that a systolic murmur can be heard in over 90 per cent of pregnant women (Bleich, 1970; Cutforth and MacDonald, 1971). In my own practice I am able to detect a systolic murmur in over 50 per cent of my antenatal patients. I have found this physical sign useful in dealing with missed abortion, when the murmur has disappeared a day or two before the 'Pregnosticon' test has gone negative. This physical sign deserves to be more widely known.

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References

Bleich, A. (1970). *Journal Medical Association Georgia*, 59, 34-35.

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Greenhill, J. P. (1965). *Obstetrics*. 13th edition. New York: Appleton-Century-Croft.

DR D. SCOTT NAPIER

Sir,
May I point out that the first provost of the East Anglia Faculty was not Dr Scott Napier, as stated in Dr Woolstone's obituary (*June Journal*, p. 382), but was the late James Dundas Simpson, a member of the Foundation Council? In commemoration of this an annual address is delivered by a member of the Faculty.

It was in the home of Scott Napier in Norwich that the meeting of foundation members was held to inaugurate the Faculty, and he became its first representative on Council.

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SINGLE-HANDED GENERAL PRACTICE

Sir,
I should like to confirm that single-