

Table 1. Systolic pressure.

140	150	160	170	180	190	200	210	220	230	240	280	Total											
2	1	2	6*	9	1	16	1	29	3	18	5	28	—	22	1	13	—	3	—	2	1	163

*All contributed by one doctor.
Zero preference: 145/163 (89 per cent).

Table 2. Diastolic pressure.

80	90	100	110	120	130	140	150	160	Total								
2	1	1	2	20	21	68	27	34	4	4	—	4	—	1	—	3	192

Zero preference: 136/192 (71 per cent). Non-zeros: 40/56, either 5 or 6.

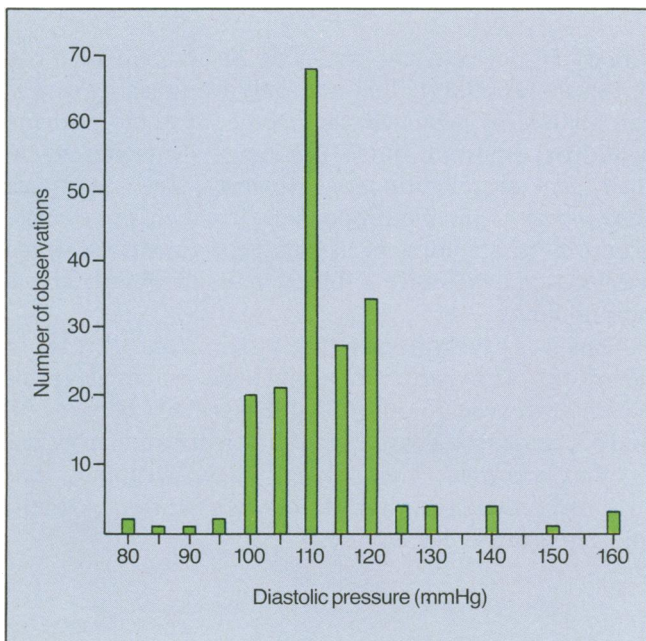


Figure 2. Diastolic pressure.

Discussion

The advantage of this study was that the findings reported here are peripheral to the main objective and are not coloured by the necessity to take and record blood pressure for research purposes.

The findings suggest that general practitioners see little use in trying to record blood pressure any more accurately than to the nearest 10 mmHg. Such a pragmatic decision may be reasonable in view of the diurnal and moment-to-moment variation which occurs in the individual subject. It does not, however, account for the preference for 110 mmHg as diastolic pressure. This suggests that a decision to treat has many dimensions, as it should, and that this decision is justified, *post hoc* rather than *propter hoc*, by a diastolic pressure of 110 mmHg. Others might like to examine their own digit preferences.

References

Kapoor, A., Mowbray, J. F., Porter, K. A. *et al.* (1980). Significance of haematuria in hypertensive patients. *Lancet*, 1, 231.
 Ryan, W. A. (1981). Microscopic haematuria in hypertension. *Lancet*, 2, 994.

Address for reprints

J. S. McCormick, Department of Community Health, Trinity College, 196 Pearse Street, Dublin 2.

Words our patients use

- 'Pinkie'—fifth finger (Scotland).
- 'Hench'—hip region (Scotland).
- 'Lisk'—groin (Scotland).
- 'Oxter'—axilla (Scotland).
- 'Thrapple'—throat or thyroid cartilage (Scotland).
- 'Bet'—unwell (of a part of the body) (Tyneside).
- 'Poleaxed'—in a deep sleep, comatose (Tyneside).
- 'Weeish'—odd taste in mouth (Tyneside).
- 'Pap o' ya' ass'—uvula (Tyneside).
- 'Lear'—weak and empty with hunger: "I feel lear" (Berkshire).
- 'Quilt'—to swallow: "My throat was so sore I couldn't quilt" (Berkshire).
- 'A box of birds'—recovered from an illness (New Zealand).
- 'As good as gold'—well, *not* of good behaviour (New Zealand).
- "I want putting in a bag and shaking up"—(self-deprecatingly)—I feel really out of sorts (South Yorkshire).