

Correspondence

A CORRECTION

DEAR SIR,

I should be grateful if a correction could be published concerning the paper by Oswald, I., Berger, R. J., Jaramillo, R. A., Keddie, K. M. G., Olley, P. C., and Plunkett, G. B., in the *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 1963, pages 66 to 78. On page 74 of this in Table I, where reference is made to % Time A Stage, this should in fact read "Time A Stage (min.)". All other references to percentages are correct.

IAN OSWALD

*University of Edinburgh,
Department of Psychological Medicine.*

POST-ENCEPHALITIC SYNDROMES

DEAR SIR,

The parents of a patient recently in this hospital have it in mind to try and ascertain the size of the problem produced by Encephalitis. They would like as a first step to compose an index of sufferers from post-encephalitic states, in the hope that some organization on the lines of those working for Spastics might eventually be formed.

There must be many post-encephalitic patients whose conditions are slight and possibly subclinical, and others in whom the true diagnosis is never reached. Where the diagnosis is established, it would be of the greatest possible assistance if doctors would persuade their patients (or families) to communicate (or permit the doctors to do so) with Mr. W. A. C. Myers, 1 St. Leonards Lodge, Maze Hill, St. Leonards on Sea (Telephone: Hastings 6266). Mr. Myers hopes to compile a register giving at least the following particulars:

Name, age (with date of birth), address (and telephone number if known), degree of disablement (in general terms), and approximately at what age the attack of encephalitis occurred.

*Hellingly Hospital,
Hailsham, Sussex.*

DAVID RICE,
Medical Superintendent.

PHENOTHIAZINES IN URINE

DEAR SIR,

With reference to a recent paper by S. Gold, P. D. Griffiths and R. G. Huntsman in the *Journal*

of Mental Science, 108, 88-94 (1962) on "Phenothiazines in Urine", we would like to call the authors' attention to an article of ours "Review of Rapid Urine Tests for Phenothiazine and Related Drugs" (1) in which the limitations of the individual tests were discussed.

We do not know the dosage ranges of the individual drugs for which urine tests were performed, but would like to stress the fact that the high percentage of negative tests encountered by these authors cannot be confirmed by us on the basis of many thousands of specimens tested.

In contrast, we wish to emphasize the following points:

1. False negative tests are almost entirely due to failure of patients to actually ingest the drugs. Many cases of apparent false negative tests reported to us by physicians or nurses were carefully re-checked by us: tablet medication was replaced with liquid medication or intramuscular injection. Especially paranoid patients were not allowed to use the bathroom for 30 minutes after oral drug administration in order to prevent them from disposing of liquid medication by self-induced vomiting. Without exception, all previously negative tests were found positive under such "foolproof" supervision. In many hundreds of such closely supervised administrations it became obvious that as little as 20 mg. of any phenothiazine drug or imipramine yields a reliably positive urine colour test, since even fractions of a microgram of these drugs per ml. of urine produce distinct colour reactions. We therefore believe the authors' conclusion that negative tests are unreliable to be erroneous. We are confident that with rigorous checking on drug ingestion or with an occasional switching to i.m. injection the same results would be seen.

2. In contrast thereto, the problem of false positives, especially in the low intensity levels of some of the colour reactions, was of genuine concern to us. Both endogenous and exogenous factors were found to account for these, and our experiences were reported in the above-mentioned review. The authors seem to trust any positive test result implicitly, but should be aware of the necessary precautions.

3. Frequently urines do not show the expected drug level, but a lesser one. This may occur even in patients most conscientiously ingesting all prescribed