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Macrophage electrophoretic mobility test

The report by Crozier *et al.* (1976) that the macrophage electrophoretic mobility test (MEM) is ineffective in the diagnosis of cancer is in full agreement with that of our group at Weston Park Hospital, Sheffield (Shelton *et al.*, 1975). While the MEM test may be of value in the hands of highly specialist workers it is certainly of no present value outside such centres. It is interesting that a simple macrophage migration inhibition test to encephalitogenic factor gave similar results to the complex and capricious MEM test. It seems likely that further exploration and refinement of the simpler technique is a more hopeful approach to cancer diagnosis than the MEM test.

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Plasma paracetamol estimation

Spooner *et al.* (1976) claim that the method of Routh *et al.* (1968), for the measurement of plasma paracetamol, is relatively insensitive and more susceptible to interference from other drugs than the method of Dordoni *et al.* (1973). Although we agree that the former procedure is less sensitive, we feel that this is not a practical problem in the investigation of suspected paracetamol overdose. In fact, the improved sensitivity which these authors obtain limits the linearity of the method to 1000 $\mu\text{mol/l}$, necessitating some modification to the procedure in order to measure higher levels, which are often encountered in overdosage.

With regard to specificity, we have found no interference by phenobarbitone in the Routh procedure provided that the extraction is performed as originally described, that is, from ether into sodium bicarbonate solution before adjusting the pH. If this is omitted and the ether is shaken with sodium hydroxide solution instead, then barbiturate is extracted and does interfere.

Phenylbutazone is a problem in both procedures, and scanning of spectra is essential to minimise the risk of reporting false plasma paracetamol values (Wiener *et al.*, 1976). Simply reading at one wavelength gives no indication of the presence of interfering compounds. Interference by phenylbutazone does not occur in the rapid colorimetric method described by Glynn and Kendal (1975), several modifications of which are now in use. In fact this method seems relatively free from the effects of other drugs with the exception of some sulphonamide preparations which could interfere at high concentration (Wiener, 1976).

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