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Polly-pica treated by xerography

In these days of photocopying it is difficult to know why so many reprints are requested. Below is one reason: it concerns our article which appeared at the front of this journal in 1977.¹ Extracts of a letter received from the PHLs Lab (Preston) are reproduced below.

"In this laboratory until the *J Clin Pathol* is sent to the binders they are kept well hidden. Recently, contrary to normal practice, two years' issues prior to binding were lent to an MLSO preparing for her examinations. She returned them after two days, white-faced and solemn with the following story:

Her pet parrot (Fig.), a bird that seldom flies or even walks, had been left alone in the room with the journals. On her return a half-eaten apple, a vandalised plant, and the front of *J Clin Pathol* 1977;**30**:1-12 were spread over the carpet.

May we please therefore request a reprint of your article.

As well as her interest in gastrointestinal pathology, "Polly" can whistle Col Bogey and blow raspberries. Her owner Mrs Catherine Seed sends her apologies."

We thought you would like to know that your journal is so widely appreciated and

well chewed over.

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Aetiological agents and laboratory diagnosis of bacteraemic shock

In your report of a symposium on septic shock,¹ Dr Shanson claimed that "during the last 30 years in Britain the incidence of bacteraemias due to Gram-negative organisms has greatly increased." He gave the numbers of isolates from blood cultures during 1977 in a district hospital in London; *Escherichia coli* was the most frequent cause of bacteraemia.

In Ayrshire we have found that during the past two years *E coli* has decreased in importance as a cause of bacteraemia, probably due to increasing use of short courses of perioperative antibiotics for gastrointestinal and pelvic surgery. Thus from 1974-8, *E coli* was the most frequent

pathogen isolated each year from blood cultures in Ayrshire. In 1979 the most frequent pathogen was *Staphylococcus aureus*, which was isolated from 27 (26%) of 102 patients with bacteraemia, *E coli* from 22%, and other coliform species from 14%.² In 1978 the most frequent pathogens were *E coli* from 28%, coliform species from 20%, and *Staph aureus* from 15%. Isolates of *Bacteroides* species decreased from 9% in 1978 to 5% in 1979. The decrease in Enterobacteriaceae and *Bacteroides* species was associated clinically with fewer cases of bacteraemic shock.

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