The overall incidence of organ-specific autoantibodies in our series of patients is similar to that reported in earlier studies,[1 2] 36% as opposed to 44% and 32%, and our overall incidence of autoantibodies (64%) is comparable to that (74%) reported by Harrington and Dunsmore.[2] It is of interest to note that in our study, of the three patients with non-organ-specific autoantibodies, all had skin biopsies which displayed no immunofluorescence and this supports the idea that LSA is associated with organ-specific autoimmune disease.

The present findings suggest that vulvar LSA has an autoimmune basis. An obvious extension of this work would be a study of extragenital LSA in both sexes to determine whether this form of LSA has evolved in a similar manner.

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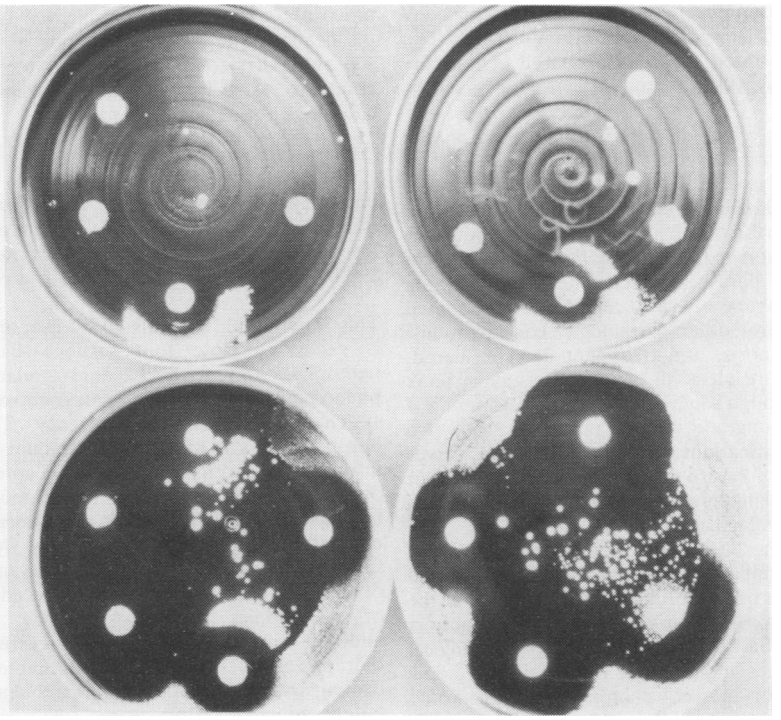
Failure of growth on sensitivity testing agar

Over a period of three years there has been a recurring problem of failure of growth of organisms noted specifically on sensitivity plates containing lysed horse blood. The organisms most frequently involved have been wild strains of *Staphylococcus aureus* and occasionally *Staph epidermidis* but much less frequently Gram-negative rods including Pseudomonas have failed. The rarity of the phenomenon in relation to Gram-negative rods makes simple thymine dependence unlikely and this is virtually excluded by the fact that occasionally the control organism is the only one failing to grow and sometimes both control and test are affected.



Top row: *Almost total suppression of growth of control Oxford Staphylococcus (outer ring) and test strains (central inoculum) with, around the chloramphenicol disc, enhancement of growth in the area of subinhibition levels of this drug, of the control organism only (left) and both the test and control organism (right)*
Bottom row: *Near normal (left) and normal growth of the control staphylococcus (right) with severe inhibition of two different test strains (central inoculum) growth of that on the left being enhanced in crescentic fashion round the chloramphenicol disc (bottom) and the benzylpenicillin disc top*

The phenomenon was first noticed on Isosensitest agar but occurs also on DST with lysed blood and on Isosensitest without lysed blood. Addition of supplements of thymine, thymidine and aneurin do not correct the problem. However on plates with a chloramphenicol disc, growth of the affected organisms is stimulated in a narrow band immediately at the edge of the zone of inhibition caused by the antibiotic—that is, in the zone of sub-inhibitory concentrations. Benzylpenicillin stimulates growth if the organism is resistant, but apparently not if the organism is sensitive.

We are quite unable to fathom the cause of this phenomenon. We are thus unable to reproduce the appearance in a model to test any theories we may have. It does not appear to be related to the swab sticks used to inoculate the plates or the broths used to prepare the suspensions for inoculation, in which the organisms grow quite happily after subsequent overnight incubation. Have any of your readers encountered this phenomenon and do they have an explanation?

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