hypnotised and trained in autohypnosis to avert an attack. This can be perfected so that it is effective in a fraction of the time for chemotherapy, without any side effects, without any need for "sleeping away" the illness, and without the incapacity.

Hypnosis is more time consuming than writing a prescription, but far less so than most physicians realise; and it has the added merit of permanent remission in appreciable numbers of sufferers.

M BASKER

Leigh-on-Sea, Essex

¹ Harding, C H, in *Proceedings of the International Congress of Hypnosis and Psychosomatic Medicine, Paris 1956*, ed J Lassner. Berlin, Springer-Verlag, 1967.

² Cedercreutz, C, in *Hypnosis at its Bicentenary. Papers from the Seventh International Congress of Hypnosis and Psychosomatic Medicine*, ed F Frankel and H Zamansky. New York, Plenum, 1978.

³ Perkins, J, *British Journal of Clinical Hypnosis*, 1975, 5, 2.

⁴ Anderson, J A, Basker, M S, and Dalton, R, *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis*, 1975, 5, 2.

Intermittent ophthalmoplegia

SIR,—We note the constructive comments of Dr J F Falconer Smith (13 January, p 124) and we welcome the chance to provide further details of our patient (2 December, p 1534).

In a short report we were indeed unable to give all the data supporting the statement that our patient was clinically euthyroid; before treatment she was examined many times by us, and once by the members of the section of endocrinology of the Royal Society of Medicine.

We had already considered using L-thyroxine and in June 1978 treatment was commenced with 0.2 mg/day; we have observations for six months on this dose. Serum thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) became 1.3 mU/l (normal <1.4 mU/l) and serum thyroxine and T₃ rose slightly, towards the upper limit of our normal range. The patient remained clinically euthyroid, but there was weight loss of 4 kg to 67 kg. While she was taking thyroxine, there were two mild attacks of ophthalmoplegia, in August and October 1978 (when she was on prednisone 10 mg/day), and a severe attack in December 1978 (when she was on prednisone 7.5 mg/day).

Thus, despite treatment with thyroxine, intermittent attacks of ophthalmoplegia continue to occur, and appear to be more severe when the dose of prednisone is reduced. The frequency of attacks appears to have diminished. However, a further period of observation is necessary to be sure of this, and to find the optimum dosage of medicines.

After we wrote the original report, the serum level of TSH antibody was kindly measured by Professor R Hall and Dr B Smith, and the result was normal. Other assays were kindly done by Dr K Mashiter.

WILLIAM F KELLY

Withington Hospital,
Manchester

GRAHAM F JOPLIN

Hammersmith Hospital,
London W12

ABC of Ophthalmology

SIR,—Mr P A Gardiner in "ABC of Ophthalmology" is to be congratulated on the very helpful current articles on eye conditions which interest general practitioners. His work is just

what many GPs want, and deserves much praise.

I would like to point out, however, that in his reference to the physiology of accommodation (2 December, p 1555) he has been misleading in saying that "the lens can be squeezed by its controlling muscle. . . . This is known as accommodation." This is the opposite of what happens, as the lens becomes more spherical when the suspensory ligament is relaxed by contraction of the ciliary muscle: no squeezing at all is involved. Mr Gardiner also makes a reference to a connection between refractive errors and colour vision, which is largely misleading.

Your editorial staff is not, in my opinion, to be congratulated on its publishing a contentious letter on myopia (20 January, p 198). Its most unsuitable title is "Myopia or juvenile expansile glaucoma" and it does little to help readers of the *BMJ*. Its author, Mr T S-B Kelly is an experienced consultant in ophthalmology, but his views are expressed as if they are facts, rather than theories, and are supposed to be substantiated by his sweeping statements and curious explanations, which appear to me to be largely fallacious and would be rejected by the great majority of ophthalmologists everywhere. It is strange to suggest that too much accommodation is the cause of myopia, a condition in which there is reduced accommodation; in hypermetropia there is increased accommodation but it seldom progresses into myopia. "Anterior chamber anomalies and other causes not yet found" in relation to nearly 10% of myopes is a reference, clearly, to figments of Mr Kelly's imagination. It is probable that bifocal spectacles (with or without special contact lenses) are as valuable in preventing pathological myopia as bee stings are in arresting so-called retinitis pigmentosa, in spite of Mr Kelly's overbearing enthusiasm for his recommended regimen. Is it not rather pathetic to hear that Mr Kelly admires the implantation of electrodes or transducers into the vitreous cavity to seek confirmation of his theory? (Would he submit his own eyes to such procedures?)

I and my colleagues will continue to serve our myopic patients with orthodox spectacles as in the past without feeling guilty of neglecting their best interests.

K DEAN FOGGITT

Hull Royal Infirmary,
Hull

Bleeding massive gastric ulcer on diflunisal (Dolobid)

SIR,—Dolobid is hailed as a major advance in analgesic therapy having, unlike aspirin, no significant effect on gastrointestinal blood loss. A perforated duodenal ulcer was recently reported by Drs R W Talbot and Helen Rees (28 October, p 1229) in a patient on diflunisal (Dolobid) and they ask, "Will it continue to be as trouble-free as predicted?" The following is a case report of a patient with major bleeding from a gastric ulcer while taking diflunisal for only 10 days.

This very active 78-year-old woman had no previous history suggestive of peptic ulceration. She regularly took slow oxprenolol 160 mg and digoxin 0.0625 mg daily and she took sorbitrate occasionally. She was afflicted by herpes zoster in the distribution of left D9. For the severe pain she took diflunisal. After 10 days' treatment with this drug she lost her appetite and vomited. The next day she had melaena. Three days later (during which time she continued to take diflunisal)

she vomited a small amount of blood. She was admitted to hospital, where the haemoglobin was found to be 6.6 g/dl. At gastroscopy the next day a very extensive superficial ulcer was seen extending from the cardia to the angulus on the lesser curve. There were patches of clot in the ulcer indicating recent bleeding. There was a small ulcer 1 cm away. The duodenum was normal. Biopsies of the ulcer margin showed no evidence of malignancy. She was transfused with 4 units of blood and given cimetidine 200 mg three times a day and 400 mg at night. The diflunisal was stopped, and the other drugs were continued. Her gastrointestinal symptoms disappeared and at gastroscopy six weeks later there was only a linear scar along the lesser curve where the ulcer had been. There was no ulceration.

The temporal relationship between administration of diflunisal and the bleeding, the absence of prior gastrointestinal symptoms, and the healing of the ulcer when diflunisal was stopped (albeit she was also given cimetidine) suggests that the diflunisal caused the gastric ulcer and the bleeding.

BRIAN SCOTT

Lincoln County Hospital,
Lincoln

Miniature peak-flow meters

SIR,—I was most interested to see Dr B J Freedman's letter (27 January, p 268) about the Pneumometer Minimus. Owing to editorial condensation it was not made quite clear in my paper (9 December, p 1627) that this instrument was a precursor of the Peak-Flow Meter. It uses a fixed orifice and a pressure gauge as originally described by Hadorn.¹ For various reasons, fully discussed by McKerrow and myself,² we did not regard this as a satisfactory method.

Although the Pneumometer is much the same size as the mini-meter it is nearly four times as heavy and its price is similar to that of the standard model. In addition, the standard meter's correlation coefficient of 0.902, compared with 0.990 for the mini-meter, means that it is only about one-third as precise. The instrument is still available and is, I believe, quite widely used on the Continent but has little sale in this country.

B M WRIGHT

Rickmansworth, Herts

¹ Hadorn, W, *Schweizer medizinische Wochenschrift*, 1942, 23, 946.

² Wright, B M, and McKerrow, C B, *British Medical Journal*, 1959, 2, 1041.

Seat-belt legislation

SIR,—In the Parliament section of News and Notes (27 January, p 276) it is noted that the chairman of the BMA Council has written to all members of Parliament telling them of the BMA's policy in regard to seat belts. The 1976 Private Member's Road Traffic (Seat Belts) Bill had the support of the Government and after successful passage through the Commons was defeated in the House of Lords on 26 April 1977 by 55 votes to 53—a majority of 2.

Careful analysis of the Lords' debate, as fully reported in *Hansard*, showed that most of the opponents were prepared to concede that compulsion would save lives and reduce serious injuries; but they argued that (a) some people would be injured as a result of wearing seat belts who would have escaped if they had not been wearing them; (b) it would impose a