antimicrobials for disease control and growth promotion in animals has been paralleled by an increase in resistance in those bacteria (that can spread from animals, often through food, to cause infections in humans).² There is concern that vancomycin resistant enterococci (VRE) may transfer resistance to *Staphylococcus aureus*.³

A European Union blanket ban on the use of antibiotics is not due to start until 2006, which is some 9 years after the issue was highlighted by the World Health Organization in 1997. Sweden banned growth promoters in 1987 and Denmark in 1998.⁴ Evidence from Germany confirms that withdrawal of avoparcin as a growth promoter reduced the incidence of VRE in healthy humans (carriers) by 50% within 5 years.⁵ Despite all the evidence, a search on the <bbc.co.uk> website reveals no articles on the subject in the first 4 years of this century. Why is there a silence of the real problem behind the MRSA story? Money!

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COMMENT ON

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Presentation to peer-review publication

NEERAJ BHASIN, JULIAN SCOTT

Leeds Vascular Institute, Leeds General Infirmary, Leeds, UK

CORRESPONDENCE TO

Mr Neeraj Bhasin, Specialist Registrar in Vascular Surgery, Leeds Vascular Institute, Leeds General Infirmary, Leeds LS1 3EX, UK
T: +44 (0)113 392 3196; M: +44 (0)7747 001054;
F: +44 (0)113 392 2624; E: neerajbhasin@hotmail.com

The Vascular Society of Great Britain and Ireland (VSGBI) achieved the highest conversion of presentation to publication (53.6%) on review of four surgical meetings.¹ We assessed the VSGBI conversion rate and calculated a conversion rate of 59.4% over 2 years, confirming this as a high quality meeting. A meta-analysis across different specialties and regions demonstrated a conversion rate of 51%.²

There are numerous limitations in the methods used by Weale *et al.*¹ To gain the most accurate results from an electronic database search, the investigator must have a detailed knowledge of the structure of the database and how it is indexed.³ Second, studies comparing electronic search methods with direct author contact revealed the electronic search underestimates conversion rate by 15.5%.³ Third, only 88% of manuscripts arising from meetings are published within 3 years;^{2,4} the search in the above article was performed at 28 months.¹ Finally, numerous inconsistencies exist between abstracts and subsequent publications, including changes in title and authorship,⁵ the basis of their search.¹

Weale and colleagues did not examine the type of study that led to publication.¹ We found 20.6% of publications were prospective observational studies, and 74.6% arose from centres with university affiliations, findings corroborated by other studies.^{3,5}

Although the methods are limited, we agree that the VSGBI meetings are of high quality.

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Our data quoted in this letter have also been submitted as a manuscript to the *Annals of the Royal College of Surgeons of England* to be considered for full-text publication.

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