impression that the veterinary surgeon is entirely to blame for the unsatisfactorily large amounts of antibiotics in milk leaving dairy farms, may I be permitted to add a small rider?

The veterinary surgeon all too often arrives in the cowshed to find that intramammary antibiotics have already been obtained by the farmer, and may have already been used. Furthermore, the practitioner may not be informed of such treatment. The veterinary profession is seriously concerned about the dangers of such circumstances, and the *Veterinary Record* of the same date as your own article devotes four pages to the subject. The law provides for supervision of distribution of antibiotics to farmers, but in the farmer's and everybody's interests more effective control must be implemented.—I am, etc.,

Department of Veterinary Hygiene
and Preventive Medicine,
Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies,
University of Edinburgh.

PATRICK BARDEN.

SIR,—The leading article "Antibiotics in Milk" (June 8, p. 1491) prompts me to comment since mention is made of an isoxazolyl penicillin used for the treatment of bovine mastitis. This semi-synthetic penicillin, cloxacillin, was discovered in our research laboratories and is marketed as "orbenin."

It is agreed that a simple routine test for the presence of cloxacillin in milk is not available. With refined techniques of assay we have been able to determine levels of cloxacillin in milk, although these techniques would not normally be employed in a routine test. With a knowledge of the dangers of the presence of antibiotics in milk for human consumption, the base for orbenin intramammary suspension was specially formulated to ensure that milk is free of antibiotic for 36 hours after treatment. We have regularly informed veterinary surgeons that milk obtained from cows treated with orbenin will be free 36 hours after treatment. This is well within the limits recommended by the recent report.¹

Since the report was published we have prepared warning slips stating that milk should be withheld for 36 hours after the last treatment with orbenin, and these have been inserted into all packs leaving the factory. We have advised all veterinary surgeons of this warning and sought their co-operation in publicizing this when prescribing the product for use on the farm.—I am, etc.,

Brentford, Middlesex.

G. J. WILKINS,
Managing Director,
Beecham Research Laboratories Ltd.

REFERENCE

¹ *Antibiotics in Milk in Great Britain*, 1963. H.M.S.O., London.

Trachoma in Britain

SIR,—I have noted the interesting comments of Mr. F. C. Rodger (May 25, p. 1412) concerning the reintroduction into Britain of active trachoma by Commonwealth immigrants. I fully concur with his view that this is a serious threat to the ocular health of people in the United Kingdom. In my position as ophthalmologist to one of the large dock hospitals in the East End of London I have over the past few years seen quite a number of cases of highly active trachoma, particularly in Indian and Pakistani immigrants. In some instances whole families have been infected. The

children attend local schools and infection of their schoolmates must always be a serious hazard. Mr. Rodger suggests that trachoma should be made a notifiable disease, and with this view I feel that every practising ophthalmologist would agree.

Some time back I had a case of an elderly Indian woman who had been admitted into this country to reside with her children who had been established here for a number of years. She was quite blind from advanced neglected glaucoma and presumably could become a substantial charge on the local rates. It always seems a pity that a thorough medical examination is not required of all immigrants to this country. We could at least ensure that adequate treatment could be offered to them if admitted, and without avoidable delay.—I am, etc.,

London W.1.

LIONEL M. GREEN.

* * A leading article on this subject appears at p. 1626.—Ed., B.M.J.

Married Quarters in Hospital

SIR,—Pressure for more married quarters in hospitals is misconceived. The problem is really the inability of junior doctors to afford an economic rent, and the proposed solution of a concealed subsidy side-steps what would be the equitable solution—namely, to pay a living wage.

I am sure that many doctors would find it distasteful to live with their families on the premises where they work. Many would resent this communal form of life, and loathe the change of home every time they change their jobs. Furthermore, when your home is tied to your job you lose some of your freedom of action and hospital boards will be even less inclined to grant reasonable working hours.—I am, etc.,

London N.W.6.

MICHAEL LESER.

SIR,—The subject of married quarters in hospitals has been raised in your columns and at the same time H.M. Government announced a scheme under which £100m. will be made available for the building of new homes.

I would like to make the following suggestion as a constructive contribution to the solution of a difficult problem. Could not the Ministry of Health and the B.M.A. form a housing association in order to build flats and small houses which could then be let to members of the hospital staff at cost? Alternatively, a number of housing associations might be formed, sponsored in each case by the hospital management committee or board of governors on the one hand and by the local B.M.A. branch, the medical committee, or some members of the consultant staff on the other. Such an arrangement need cost nothing to the N.H.S. and the B.M.A. except the time of some administrators and perhaps of the hospital architect, and seems to me to bring the benefits of Sir Keith Joseph's fund to one of the groups of people which it is intended to help—namely, young skilled people with little capital, but whose careers demand mobility of labour, not only for their own good but also for the nation's.

If any senior member of the profession or of the Health Service's administrative side will take this suggestion and make it fact, I can assure him of the gratitude of hundreds, if not thousands, of doctors my age to say nothing of generations to come. Quite apart from that, I think he would find the improvement of the