haemorrhages at high altitude⁷ was not related to microvascular fragility; at 4900 m splinter haemorrhages were seen in four climbers with less than 15 petechiae and in none of four with more than 20 petechiae. Nail and retinal haemorrhages were not confined to those suffering from acute mountain sickness.

In our study microvascular fragility did appear to be a feature of high altitude exposure, supporting the view of Hunter *et al.*¹ The slow ascent and greater altitude attained by our expedition members may account in part for the differences between our results and those of Dr Milledge and others. In eight of our climbers tested at sea level the mean petechiae count was one and no increase in petechiae was observed after ascent to 3800 m. In the authors' group a mean petechiae count of 11.5 was seen at 1300 m altitude; no sea level data were presented.

In the absence of an association with altitude sickness symptoms or arterial oxygen tension it is unlikely that increased microvascular fragility is implicated in the pathogenesis of acute mountain sickness. Microvascular fragility may be a characteristic of certain people at high altitude rather than characteristic of high altitude sickness.

P J G FORSTER

Birmingham Medical Research
Expeditionary Society,
James Paget Hospital,
Great Yarmouth NR31 6LA

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2 Heath D, Williams DR. *Man at high altitude*. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1977.

Crohn's disease presenting as anorexia nervosa

SIR,—The title of the paper by Drs A P Jenkins and others (5 March, p 699) is misleading, because the patients they describe did not suffer from anorexia nervosa and did not present with symptoms of anorexia nervosa. They point out that the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* includes five criteria for the diagnosis of anorexia nervosa but did not add that all of these are required. The four cases reported satisfied only one of these criteria—weight loss, which is a symptom of very low diagnostic specificity. It can occur in a wide range of physical disorders which may present in young women, and in addition to Crohn's disease these include, for example, malignant disease, diabetes, and pulmonary tuberculosis. It is also a common symptom in other mental illnesses, particularly depressive disorders.

The other criteria for diagnosis, particularly disturbance of body image and refusal to maintain body weight, which involves extreme voluntary measures to lose weight, have much more diagnostic specificity and are not symptomatic of any physical disease or other psychiatric disorder. They can usually be elicited by taking a careful history from the patient and also close family members and, if doubt remains, by careful observation of the patient's behaviour.

In the first two cases reported there is no mention of these cardinal features and presumably they were not looked for. In the third case it is said that there were "no food phobias and she saw herself as thin," and in the fourth case it is said that she "did not have a distorted body image." Thus there is no reason to suppose that any of these patients had symptoms of anorexia nervosa. Three of them are said to have presented with a history of "anorexia": despite the name anorexia nervosa is

not characterised by poor appetite, although this may develop in advanced stages, and about half of all patients exhibit binges of overeating.

As doctors we tend to fear that the occasional physical disorder may be missed, even when there is no evidence for it on the basis of history and examination, and overinvestigation facilitates the process of somatisation of mental disorders, which is only now beginning to be recognised as a widespread problem in medical practice. The search for primary organic diseases in patients with anorexia nervosa delays recognition of the disorder and helps to endorse the views of patient and family that the main problem is physical. By contrast we do not appear to show equal concern about the possibility that mental illnesses may be missed when patients present with somatic complaints.

SIDNEY BENJAMIN

University Department of Psychiatry,
Manchester Royal Infirmary,
Manchester M13 9WL

The need to make rugby safer

SIR,—While spinal injuries from rugby are a cause for concern (16 January, p 149; 13 February, p 498; and 5 March, p 719), particularly when there are avoidable factors, these injuries should be viewed in perspective. Other sporting pursuits can be much more hazardous.

In our spinal injuries unit there have been only two admissions in the past 10 years because of injuries from rugby. There have, however, been 12 admissions after recreational diving accidents, five of which occurred while the victim was abroad on holiday. Most of these injuries were at unsupervised pools, beaches, or open water. Nine of these patients suffered complete spinal injuries, and three incomplete injuries, but all were at a high (C4-6) level. Our experience in this respect is similar to that of Young and Northup,¹ who also indicate that diving injuries are much more common than rugby injuries.

A public education campaign is urgently required to emphasise the dangers of diving in unknown territory, particularly abroad and on holiday, when alcohol may play an important part, to try to reduce the incidence of these tragic injuries.

NEIL W VALENTINE
MARK A DELARGY

West of Scotland Spinal Injuries Unit,
Philiphill Hospital,
Glasgow G76 9HP

1 Young JS, Northup NE. Statistical information pertaining to some of the most commonly asked questions about spinal cord injury. *Science Digest* 1979;1:17.

Diabetes and pancreatic cancer

SIR,—Professor R C N Williams (13 February, p 445) suggests that the recent onset of diabetes or a sudden increase in the requirement for insulin in a diabetic should raise the suspicion of cancer of the pancreas and may offer a clue to early diagnosis. That last claim, however, is unfortunately not supported by our experience.

A retrospective examination of the files of all patients with proved pancreatic carcinoma diagnosed at our hospital in 1973-83 showed diabetes (two or more sequential fasting venous blood glucose concentrations of ≥ 7.2 mmol/l) in 45 out of 74 patients compared with only eight out of 70 matched patients with carcinoma of the colon ($p < 0.005$). In 10 patients diabetes had been diagnosed more than two years before the pancreatic tumour (range 64-120 months, mean

64 months), in 11 less than a year before (range 0.5-12 months, mean 3.3 months, median 3 months), in 15 concomitantly, and in nine after the tumour was found (mean 5.1 months). All patients had locally unresectable or metastatic disease at the time of diagnosis. Most of the patients with recent, possibly tumour related, diabetes had only mild to moderate hyperglycaemia (less than 11.1 mmol/l in 23 of 35 patients) and many were treated by diet alone. No relation was found between the development of diabetes and either the site of the tumour in the pancreas or its estimated size.

Thus the well known association between pancreatic cancer and the development of diabetes¹ is even more striking in an Israeli population, but the belief that awareness of this association can not only serve as a diagnostic clue in patients with unexplained pain, weight loss, or jaundice but also aid an "early" diagnosis of potentially resectable disease seems overoptimistic, at least for the population we examined. The appearance of diabetes associated with pancreatic cancer usually heralds the more common and ominous signs by too short a time (median three months) to have any real impact on the patient's prognosis.

A SCHATTNER

Department of Medicine,
Kaplan Hospital and Haddassah Medical School,
Rehovot 76100,
Israel

1 Schwartz SS, Ziedler A, Moossa AR, Kuku SF, Rubenstein AH. A prospective study of glucose tolerance, insulin, C-peptide and glucagon responses in patients with pancreatic carcinoma. *Am J Dig Dis* 1978;23:1107-10.

Early growth delay in diabetic pregnancy

SIR,—Dr Minna Bloch Petersen and others (27 February, p 598) suggest that children with a history of a first trimester crown-rump length smaller than expected from the menstrual history in diabetic pregnancy have an increased risk of developmental delay, although their results were significant only for language and speech ($p = 0.009$). It has previously been suggested that these fetuses may have experienced growth delay in very early gestation and have an increased risk of congenital malformation.¹

The existence of retarded fetal growth in very early gestation is difficult to prove unless the time of ovulation is known. Other studies^{2,3} have shown that "early fetal growth delay" occurring in four of 11 diabetic pregnancies was explained by delayed ovulation (as judged from salivary progesterone levels) and that ultrasound measurement (of biparietal diameter between 12 and 18 weeks' gestation) is significantly better than an optimal menstrual history in predicting the date of delivery.^{2,3} We have found that in 56 insulin dependent diabetic mothers with certain menstrual data, regular 28-30 day cycles, and no recent contraception 11 fetuses had a crown-rump length (measured in the first trimester) which was six or more days less than expected from the menstrual data. Among these 11 fetuses the discrepancy between ultrasound and menstrual ages was explained in two by anencephaly; the other nine were normal and healthy at delivery with birth weights > 2500 g. Of the 41 fetuses whose ultrasonic and menstrual ages agreed, two had major cardiac malformations, three aborted spontaneously, and the remainder were normal and healthy at delivery with birth weights > 2500 g. Our nine fetuses with "early growth delay" continued to grow at the rate expected had their ultrasonic ages been correct, as did those in the study of Dr Bloch Petersen and others, suggesting that, despite the rigorous inclusion criteria, ovulation in these pregnancies