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Submaximal exercise testing early after myocardial infarction

Sir,

Exercise testing after myocardial infarction has undoubted prognostic value.^{1,2} Controversy remains, however, about both the reproducibility and sensitivity of such tests^{3,4} and is compounded by differences in patient selection, timing, and drug treatment.

Sullivan, Davies, and Sowton (1984; 52: 147-53) exercised 74 postinfarction patients and obtained a positive result in 54 (73%). Twelve patients were, however, taking beta blocking drugs, five of these having a negative test and a further two being limited by fatigue alone. Moreover, in four beta blocked patients there was an inadequate blood pressure response to exercise.

Others have drawn attention to the possible reduction in sensitivity of the exercise test in patients receiving beta blockers,⁵ and in a subsequent report Sowton and colleagues concede that "beta blockers may blunt haemodynamic responses and mask ischaemic changes."⁴

We have found that beta blockade invariably affects ST segment changes of the predischARGE test, the degree of ST segment shift after beta blockade being reduced or indeed absent depending on the initial magnitude of such elevation/depression. End points may also be affected—for example, that of fatigue replacing those of ST changes or angina before beta blockade.

Patients with myocardial infarction receiving short term treatment with beta blockers should therefore have their drugs withheld before the predischARGE test if this is to be of optimal sensitivity.

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- 3 Haskell WL, Debusk R. Cardiovascular responses to repeated treadmill exercise testing soon after myocardial infarction. *Circulation* 1979; 60: 1247-51.
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Notices

British Cardiac Society

The Annual General Meeting for 1985 will take place in Birmingham on 17 and 18 April 1985, and the closing date for receipt of abstracts was 8 January 1985. On the second day of the Meeting (18 April) the Society, in conjunction with the Association of Physicians, will hold a one day symposium in commemoration of the bicentenary of the publication of William Withering's account of the foxglove. Only a limited number of places will be available for non-members, who should direct their inquiries to: Professor W A Littler, Department of Cardiovascular Medicine, East

Birmingham Hospital, Bordesley Green East, Birmingham B9 5ST.

The Autumn Meeting will be held at the Wembley Conference Centre, London, on 26 to 28 November 1985, and the closing date for receipt of abstracts will be 1 August 1985.

Doppler ultrasound in the assessment of cardiovascular function

A one day meeting organised by the International Cardiac Doppler Society is to be held at the Great Western Royal Hotel, London W2, on 1 March 1985. Further information may be obtained from: Dr A M Salmasi, St Mary's Hospital, London W2.