Changing concepts in asthma

Sir,

In his recent Annotation (*Archives*, 1978, **53**, 525), Dr Milner mentioned the importance of dynamic compression of the airways, in increasing the expiratory resistance in asthma, and he gave credit to Mead for introducing the concept (Mead, 1973).

More than 20 years ago, Dekker and Groen pointed out that the concept had its genesis in the last century. Their own paper (Dekker and Groen, 1957), and Groen's more recent review (Groen, 1976) are very relevant to the experience of those of us who see asthmatics outside hospital. The mechanism helps to explain those rare but dramatic episodes when an asthmatic patient, currently asymptomatic, becomes wheezy, cyanosed, and collapsed, in the space of minutes, without any obvious precipitant. This situation may not be so well known to hospital doctors. The unlucky patients, either 'dead on arrival', or

snatched back from the jaws of death, have neither opportunity nor wish to expand on the rapidity of their deterioration. Perhaps they would not be believed if they did so?

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