Correspondence

Gastric emptying in term and preterm infants

Sir,

Contrary to clinical impression the view now held is that the rates of gastric emptying in term and preterm infants are similar. Cited in support of this view is a paper published in the *Archives* (Yu, 1975). Yu stated that 'similar rates of gastric emptying were obtained in term, preterm, and SFD infants'.

This conclusion was erroneous. Gastric emptying is dependent on volume (Hunt and MacDonald, 1954), so for comparisons between groups of babies the volume should be kept constant. In this study the volume given was 7 ml/kg, but it should be noted that the mean weight difference between the term and preterm infants was more than 1 kg. Even though the percentage of the test meal

recovered after 30 minutes was similar in term and preterm infants, it should be apparent that the number of cc evacuated in 30 minutes was more in term infants. The evidence presented in this study supports the clinical impression that gastric emptying is more rapid in term infants, but no firm conclusion can be drawn because of the differences in the volumes given.

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References

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Yu, V. Y. H. (1975). Effect of body position on gastric emptying in the neonate *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, **50**, 500-504.