seronegative. The total number of girls vaccinated or immune would have been (503+70) 573 (97.8%) before the programme and (573+4) 577 (98.5%) afterwards. Professor Smithell's figures of 566 and 570 respectively are probably due to an inadvertent miscalculation. In other words, there were 13 (2.2%) seronegative girls before and nine (1.5%) after the programme. The vaccination of four girls is worth the estimated cost of at most a few hundred pounds. There are still 20 cases a year of congenital rubella syndrome.¹ Until rubella disease is eliminated it is extremely important to achieve an uptake of 100% in women of child bearing age. If the study had been completely successful all 13 girls would have been vaccinated.

Reference

- ¹ Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. *Immunisation against infectious disease*. London: HMSO, 1988.

Reflex anal dilatation associated with severe chronic constipation in children

Sir,

Reflex anal dilatation is an important sign associated with

anal abuse in children.¹ The buttocks are parted gently and the examiner waits for up to 30 seconds. Where the sign is present, the anal sphincter dilates to up to 2–3 cm and a view of the interior of the rectum is observed. The anus then frequently closes and then reopens in a dynamic fashion.

Dr Clayden describes a 'visibly relaxed anus such as one sees when a large faecal mass has chronically distended the rectum leading to a sphincter which is dilated'—there is no suggestion of the dynamic findings of reflex anal dilatation described in his paper.²

Perhaps if doctors could agree a common vocabulary,¹ then these kind of irrelevant disagreements would not exist.

References

- ¹ Butler-Sloss E. *Report of the inquiry into child abuse in Cleveland 1987*. London: HMSO, 1988.
² Clayden GS. Reflex anal dilatation associated with severe chronic constipation in children. *Arch Dis Child* 1988;**63**:832–6.

C J HOBBS and J M WYNNE
*St James's University Hospital,
 Beckett Street,
 Leeds LS9 7TF*