We are grateful to Dr. Godfrey, for his letter has given us the opportunity to emphasize a very important point in the treatment of fibrosing alveolitis. A child with fibrosing alveolitis who initially responds to corticosteroids may deteriorate when the dose is reduced or stopped. As will be seen in Table 8 of our paper, 4 patients, following such a deterioration, improved on one occasion when corticosteroid treatment was restarted or increased. 3 of these subsequently deteriorated when the steroid dose was again reduced or stopped, did not then respond to a further 'adequate' steroid therapy and died. 2 other patients (Cases 7 and 9) responded to multiple courses of steroids after episodes of deterioration and have survived. It is not possible to predict which patients will continue to be steroid-responsive and it was this fact which led us to stress that steroid therapy for fibrosing alveolitis in children should comprise at least a year's treatment and that withdrawal should be cautious and protracted.

D. HULL and C. J. HEWITT
University Hospital and Medical School, Clifton Boulevard, Nottingham NG7 2UH.

Rapid assessment of gestational age at birth

Sir,
We have assessed the gestational age of 408 newborn babies using the method of Parkin et al. (Archives, 1976, 51, 259) which is based on four external characteristics. The mean of differences between gestational age, according to the last period, and that assessed by the total score was +1.26 days and the standard deviation ±8.01 days. Thus, the 95% confidence limits of ±16 days in our series are very similar to those obtained by the above authors. The relation of total score to gestational age is shown in the Fig. The means of the gestational ages are plotted against total score. 95% confidence limits for prediction of gestational age from the score are also shown by the horizontal lines. The curve has been drawn by free hand. We find the method simple, quick, and quite accurate, so that it can be used in every day clinical practice.

ALEX. PEONIDES
Children's Asylum Maternity Hospital, Thessaloniki, Greece.

B. KATSOUGIANNOPOULOS
Department of Hygiene, University of Thessaloniki, Greece.

Fig. Relation of total score to gestational age.