

Drs Kovar and Mayne comment:

We are grateful to Dr Nelson for his comments. We may have misled him by using the term plasma inorganic phosphorus when the inorganic phosphate is measured; the two terms are commonly interchanged in medical literature. His second point on the risk of calcium/phosphate precipitation if a state of saturation is approached is also fair but we are unsure of its relevance and also remain unconvinced of the reason for giving calcium and phosphate independently. Preterm formulas are commonly used either as a complement to breast milk or alone. The importance of our case is that it highlights a potential clinical complication of these formulas in that hypocalcaemia may occur despite an absolute increase in calcium intake because of an effect on the blood calcium to phosphate ratio.

Uncombable hair

Sir,

Shortly after reading the report of Garty *et al*¹ we had the opportunity of studying by electron microscopy a case of non-familial uncombable hair in a 5 year old girl. In agreement with the report of Garty *et al*, as well as with most others dealing with this peculiar anomaly, the electron microscopic examination showed longitudinal grooves along the axis of our patient's hair (Fig. 1). This finding might have reinforced the assumption that the



Fig. 1 Electron micrograph showing a longitudinal groove along the axis of our patient's hair ($\times 1250$).

presence of such grooves is the common morphological feature of this anomaly, if we had not found similar grooves in the hair of all the three 'normal' adults used as controls (Fig. 2). The presence of longitudinal grooves seems, therefore, totally non-specific and can hardly be related to the 'uncombability' of the hair. It is possible, moreover, that these grooves represent an artifact rather than a real phenomenon, since we have been unable to find them in cross-sectioned hairs (Fig. 3).

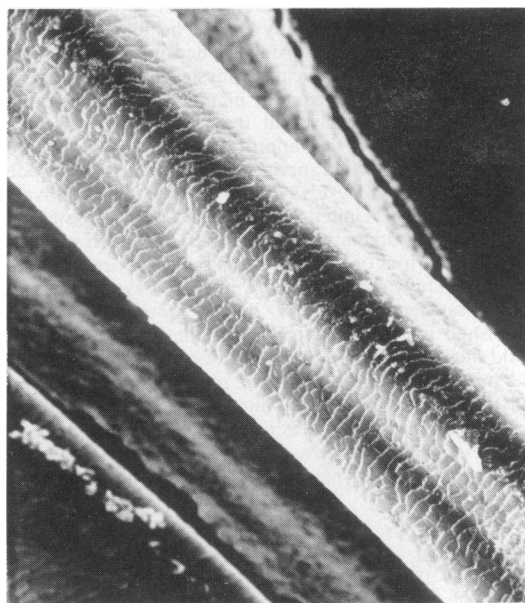


Fig. 2 Electron micrograph showing a similar groove along the axis of 'normal' adult's hair ($\times 320$).



Fig. 3 Electron micrograph of a cross section of the patient's hair, which has an oval shape ($\times 640$).