Costs and outcomes in a regional neonatal intensive care unit

Sir,

Newns et al report the costs of intensive neonatal care in Birmingham in 1980 and 1981. In succeeding to calculate the costs of this service to the National Health Service they are to be congratulated. No similar data are available. There is, however, the danger that in the absence of other cost evaluations many health authorities may use this information as a benchmark to price their own services now that 'Sainsbury' style management is imminent.

Nursing staff salaries, the major component of their costs, have risen considerably in excess of the average compounded inflation rates. Furthermore, the nursing staff levels at Birmingham Maternity Hospital not commented upon directly by the authors were, in 1981 to 1983, to quote a West Midlands Health Authority report 'grossly unsatisfactory in the ratio of trained to untrained staff and unsatisfactory at night'. That they cared so well for their neonates while being so short staffed is to their credit but for those of us being called upon to project the present costs for intensive neonatal services a more realistic estimate would be to double the quoted figures.

Clinical significance of gastro-oesophageal reflux

Sir,

Am I to assume that Professor Carré examines radiologically all regurgitating babies he sees?

Professor Carré comments:

Dr Connor is mistaken in his assumption. There was indeed a time when I would have had the great majority of regurgitating infants examined radiologically, but resulting from experience gained at that time only selected cases have been studied in this manner during the past 10 to 15 years. These comprise infants with persistent and particularly troublesome regurgitation, especially if associated with occasional vomiting or other clinical disturbance such as respiratory illness, and all younger regurgitating siblings of children with a partial thoracic stomach.

Coagulation defect in congenital tyrosinaemia

Sir,

We agree with Professor Özsoylu that low fibrinogen