Antibiotic treatment of suspected neonatal meningitis

Sir,—The annotation on antibiotic treatment of suspected neonatal meningitis seems to demonstrate that optimal treatment of this thankfully rare disorder is still not clear. The suggested array of antibiotic treatment and combined routes of administration may provide cover against a wide range of organisms, but is such treatment in the best interests of every patient? In a sick hypotensive infant who may already have compromised renal function the combination of aminoglycoside and cephalosporin may exacerbate the problem. To state that 'Gentamicin should be used primarily to treat the associated septicaemia' is misleading in view of the clear evidence that cephalosporins are incapable of doing this. Is there any evidence to suggest that cefotaxime is ineffective in the treatment of bacteremia in neonates? I am concerned by the conviction of the authors in their management proposals. To begin a paragraph stating 'there is no doubt in our minds that intraventricular treatment should be used' and end it with 'there has been no study of intraventricular treatment... and little information on the ventricular drug concentration achieved after systemic treatment alone in dilated ventricles' is perhaps a little rash in view of the findings of significantly increased mortality after intraventricular treatment in the American study. The conclusion of McCracken and colleagues was that 'intraventricular therapy cannot be recommended for the routine management of neonatal meningitis caused by Gram negative enteric bacilli' in the absence of a further randomised multicentre trial it is surely ill advised to recommend the adoption of this invasive and potentially dangerous mode of treatment as the standard treatment in neonatal Gram negative meningitis with ventricular dilatation.

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When should the colic patient have an intestinal biopsy?

Sir,—Gluten challenges and intestinal biopsies are stressful procedures both for colic patients and for the doctors dealing with them. While we recognise that the time has...