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Dr Isaacs comments:
I certainly agree with Professor Dodge and Dr Sagher that milk lipids may provide important protective effects. Furthermore, I find their observation that alterations in the medium chain fatty acid composition of mouse milk may reduce the severity of infection from rotavirus, a non-enveloped virus, extremely interesting. We, of course, did not determine the effect of the stomach contents of infants fed the various formulas on non-enveloped viruses. Rather, our statement that milk fatty acids and monoglycerides have antiviral activity against enveloped viruses but not non-enveloped viruses was based upon the results of a number of studies by us and others showing that only enveloped viruses are inactivated by the non-esterified fatty acids.

In the early studies of Welsh et al. and others, we introduced the concept of using milk in the treatment of viral infections. Welsh et al. (1979) showed that milk fed to mice mammary tumor virus. Cancer Res 1979;39:626-9.


Fluorescein dilaurate test of exocrine pancreatic function in cystic fibrosis

SIR,—I read with interest the paper by Drs Dalzell and Heaf,1 particularly as we had a very similar study published in the Archives of Disease in Childhood four years ago (for which no reference was made).2 In both studies the index cases and controls were similar in age and number, but we prescribed double the dose of fluorescein dilaurate than did Dalzell and Heaf. Our study also demonstrated significantly different fluorescein dilaurate excretion ratios between patients with cystic fibrosis and normal subjects, with the ratios being significantly reduced in patients with cystic fibrosis (p<0.01). An additional component to our study was to compare the fluorescein dilaurate test with faecal chymotrypsin estimation. We found a positive correlation between the two tests (R=0.69, p<0.02).

Although the fluorescein dilaurate test appears to detect exocrine pancreatic insufficiency, in practice it is of limited value as it is in capsule form and not suitable for the age group in which the presentation of cystic fibrosis is most prevalent. We did explore the possibility of the test being used to titrate pancreatic supplement administration. If cholesteryl ester hydrolyase, which is responsible for liberating the fluorescein from fluorescein dilaurate, was incorporated into a pancreatic enzyme supplement, it may be possible to use the fluorescein dilaurate test to determine the most effective dosage of pancreatic enzyme for individual patients. Unfortunately this enzyme does not appear to be present in any of the commercially available preparations.


