endotoxin damages the cochlea, children with meningococcal disease would be a suitable population to study. Children present predominantly with septicaemia, meningitis, or a mixed picture of septicaemia and meningitis. 1 Deafness in survivors of fulminant septicaemia, meningococcaemia without meningitis, and meningitis alone might be commoner in all groups than in a control population. A case-control follow up study of a cohort of children with meningococcal disease would answer this question.

The practical conclusion of such a study might be that clinicians should be ordering routine audiological follow up for patients with meningococcal septicaemia, as well as for those with meningitis.

ALISTAIR THOMSON
OMNIA MARZOUK
Institute of Child Health,
Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital
Alder Hey,
Eaton Road,
Liverpool L12 2AP


Head injury—how community paediatricians can help

SIR,—Head injury must be the major health issue among children in the United Kingdom, accounting for 15% of deaths in children aged 1-15 years. 1 However, we question the admission rate of 45 per 1000 children per year after head injury quoted by Dr Crouchman in her recent article. 2 We have recently conducted a retrospective review of all children aged less than 16 years who died or were admitted to hospital after head injury in the Northern region during the eight year period 1979-86. 1, 3 4 During this period head injury was the single major cause of admission to hospital, however, the annual admission rate was only a tenth of that quoted by Dr Crouchman, being 4.9 per 1000 children. In view of the importance of accurate epidemiological data in planning services for head injured children, we believe that it is imperative that this issue is clarified.

We would also like to suggest that community paediatricians should have a leading role in the prevention of head injury and not confine their activities simply to the provision of rehabilitation services. The recent evidence that serious head injury occurs more frequently at particular times of day and in areas of high material deprivation 3 4 should surely stimulate community paediatricians to take the lead in initiating appropriately targeted preventive measures.

P M SHARPLES
J A EYRE
Department of Child Health, The Medical School, Framlington Place, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 4HH