delusional conditions with a hypochondriacal content may respond, often dramatically, to treatment with the diphenylbutylpiperidine agent pimozide in a dosage of 2–8 mgm daily, where a variety of treatment regimes has previously failed. It appears that this group is identified by the absence of a primary depressive illness, and that the delusional content is probably related to a paranoid-type process of a schizophrenic nature. We agree with Riding and Munro that dysmorphophobic (neurotic) conditions do not respond to this approach. Dermatological hypochondriasis, as described by Zaidens (4), is specifically mentioned by Bebbington and included in his poor-prognosis group. This is not an uncommon disorder, and where such conditions may be classified as non-dysthymic delusional parasitosis. Reilly, Jopling and Beard (5) and Riding and Munro (2) have demonstrated that remarkable improvement may be forthcoming following treatment with pimozide.

It is difficult to decide whether either of Bebbington's cases could be considered as properly delusional, though Case 2 sounds probable. We have noted that the personality in this case exhibited obsessional traits, and it is our impression that such traits are commonly present in patients who respond favourably to pimozide.

TERENCE M. REILLY
A. W. BEARD

Dept of Psychological Medicine,
The Middlesex Hospital,
London, W.1

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CONTROLLED TRIALS OF IMIPRAMINE

DEAR SIR,

Drs Rogers and Clay (*Journal*, Dec. 1975, **127**, p 599) reviewed 30 studies comparing imipramine to placebo and noted that the great majority of them show imipramine to be significantly superior to placebo. Kerry and Orme (*Journal*, March 1976, **128**, p 310) have questioned this interpretation and say that it would be unfortunate if the results of this particular statistical review were accepted uncritically as evidence that imipramine is therapeutically effective. Rogers and Clay made no effort to test statistically the hypothesis that imipramine is more effective than placebo from the combined evidence of all 30 studies. Cochran (1954) provides a method for combining statistics from a number of independent trials so as to come out with an overall statement that the probability observed in the combined trials differs from that which would be expected by chance alone. Using the data provided by Rogers and Clay, the probability that the differences between imipramine and placebo could be observed by chance alone is less than 10^{-31}. This would seem to be sufficient evidence that tricyclics are really superior to placebo in treating depression, although, it is obvious to anyone in the field that much more needs to be learned about the clinical use of tricyclics.

Kerry and Orme assert that Rogers and Clay analysed only a small proportion of the published trials on antidepressants and that there are many trials in which a placebo has achieved a better result than an antidepressant, but that these trials were not included. We have reviewed the same studies on imipramine and our tally checks almost exactly with that of Rogers and Clay (Davis, 1970; Davis *et al*, 1969). In our analysis we did not uncover the 'many trials in which placebo has achieved a better result than an antidepressant' which Kerry and Orme claim were not included in the analysis of Rogers and Clay. In fact, we did not find that among studies which followed strict research design there were *any* that reported placebo significantly more effective than tricyclic antidepressants. There are, of course, many open trials of imipramine which report imipramine to be effective, and there are both open and placebo-controlled random assignment trials with other tricyclic antidepressants which also show that these tricyclics are effective agents in the treatment of depression. Both these sources of evidence would further support the efficacy of tricyclics.

JOHN M. DAVIS
STEPHEN E. ERICKSEN

Illinois State Psychiatric Institute,
Chicago, Illinois, USA

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