EDITORIAL

As mentioned in the Editorial of the last journal, this number is devoted to the Proceedings of an international symposium held at Newmarket in May this year, and devoted to the problem of the detection of doping in racehorses. The organising committee of the symposium asked the B.A.S.M. if we would publish these proceedings, and we are gratified that this journal should be the one asked to do this. The B.A.S.M. was invited to send a representative. Delegates came from many countries in which horse racing occurs. Many of the overseas analysts worked in laboratories in which the detection of doping in human sport was an important part of the work, and several of these workers were already well known to us from international meetings which included various aspects of doping in sport, and the illegal use of anabolic steroids in sportsmen and racing animals.

It is realised that most of the papers included are very technical, and that the techniques described will be of direct use to only a small number of our regular subscribers, but it is felt that doping is one of the major problems in sport of all types, human and animal, and that this journal is the correct place for a full description of the techniques, limitations, and practical problems of actual dope detection. Because the samples are of equine origin, some adaptations have to be made if the same techniques are to be used for human biological products, but in general, the detection of drugs in urine or blood is the same for each species. For those readers who are not very up to date in modern analytical procedures, we have included a brief account of the principles involved in such methods as gas-chromatography, mass-spectrometry and so on; these techniques are used not only in dope detection but also in general medicine for monitoring therapeutic levels of drugs, hormone balance, treatment of poisoning, and many other biochemical investigations.

One of the most difficult problems facing anyone concerned with doping in sport is that of permitted medication. Regulations about what drugs may be used therapeutically, and at what time before an event they must be discontinued, vary from sport to sport, from country to country, and as can be learned from Jaggard’s paper, in the U.S.A. from state to state. An Irish event horse was eliminated from the Olympic three-day event because of a positive test resulting from an anti-colic injection given eight days before. H.R.H. Prince Philip, in his capacity as President of the International Equestrian Federation, discussed the question of the therapeutic use of phenylbutazone, which is one of the substances permitted in human sport under Olympic rules, and apparently for horses also, but it is absolutely forbidden for use in British racehorses, and in racing in most countries, even if used for treatment of a pathological condition and the treatment declared to the organising committee or its medical advisory panel well in advance of the event. This problem is discussed in Horse and Hound August 6th, 1976.

In human Olympic sport this year, some of the newer techniques in analysis succeeded in detecting exogenous anabolic steroids in three throwing-event athletes, despite international agreement among national bodies and their medical advisers that such substances be prohibited, and despite the knowledge that tests for such substances would be carried out. The results of several other positive tests are currently being discussed by the International Olympic Committee and may lead to suspension or the cancellation of medals, as reported in the daily press. Another (non-pharmacological) abuse of scientific technology was uncovered during the pentathlon.

The symposium was organised by Racecourse Security Services’ Laboratories in Newmarket, and held in their library/conference room. Lack of space limited the number of delegates to fifty, with some of the staff of the laboratory attending certain sessions, presenting papers, and giving a most comprehensive demonstration of all the analytical techniques that they are using. The laboratory is staffed by some fifteen scientists and has a back-up team of technicians, administrative and clerical staff, grooms, catering and cleaning staff, and forms a highly efficient organisation to carry out one aspect of sports medicine in which there is a proper professional service, paid for by ploughing back into the sport some of the money from the sport-watching public, collected in taxation by the Horse Race Betting Levy Board, by whom the laboratories are financed. What an advantage it would be to human sports medicine if a little of the gate money, and some of the betting money could be redeployed to pay for our own medical supervision instead of having to rely upon the kindness of a local doctor and physiotherapist to perform a professional task needing skill and judgement as a spare time hobby with no material award, and to rely upon overworked pathology departments or research units to carry out our dope tests purely as a favour!

The organising committee wish to thank the Horse Race Betting Levy Board for their most generous financial support, not only for the expenses of the symposium itself, but also for making a substantial contribution towards the publication of the proceedings. Support was also given by Messrs Finnigan Instruments Ltd., and by Arnolds’ Veterinary Products Ltd.
During a meeting lasting three days, which included two simultaneous sessions, it would be impossible to reproduce every word given. We have had to edit all the papers, and reduce them in length, but without, we hope, omitting any points of importance, either in the original communications or in the discussion that followed each paper. After the preliminary editing by Mr. Michael Moss, the Director of the Racecourse Security Services Laboratory, and by the Editor, B.J.S.M., the proofs were sent to the authors. Further proof correction was then carried out, with some additional editing, by Dr. Donald Chapman, Deputy Director of R.S.S.L., to whose painstaking thoroughness we owe a large debt. The thankless job of transcribing all the lengthy discussions fell to Miss Jennifer Clabby, whose father, Brigadier John Clabby, was a B.A.S.M. member and contributed to our first meeting on doping in sport in 1967.

Perhaps the manuscripts for this edition, with several preliminary editing processes, have given the printers more difficulties than any other series of manuscripts they have been asked to handle before, and with terms and formulae nearly as unfamiliar to the editor as to the type-setter, and original recordings handed to the block-maker to convert into suitable sized reproducible figures, we can only express our gratitude to Messrs. Wells and Blackwell of Loughborough.

CHALLENGE!

Articles sometimes appear in newspapers, magazines and medical journals in which statements are made that do not altogether agree with published and proven facts in the field of sports medicine, or which might be regarded by our members as contentious or even factually untrue. It has therefore been decided to run a feature in the Bulletin section of this journal so that any statement of this sort can be challenged by our Executive Committee or any of our members, and the author of the original article will be given the chance to reply, and justify his original comments.

HON. SECRETARY’S CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Will all members please note that Dr. Peter Sperryn has moved a short distance, and that his new address is:

49 BLAKE’S LANE, NEW MALDEN, SURREY

He has retained his former telephone number: 01-949-0607

His new feature, The Secretary’s Column, appears in the Bulletin Section.

THE NEXT NUMBER OF B.J.S.M. should be published at the end of the year. Although several manuscripts have been received and passed by the Editorial Board, anyone wishing to submit manuscripts for consideration for this or subsequent numbers is invited to send them to the Editor. Notes for the guidance of contributors appear on the inside back cover of this journal.