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Letters to the Editor

AN ALCOHOL TEST FOR SUPERFICIAL CUTANEOUS SENSIBILITY

Sir,

A number of tests have recently been devised to aid the detection of anaesthesia on the skin in patients with leprosy. Although previously published, (*Manual de Leprologia* by Bernardo Rojas, Concepcion, Paraguay, 1977), I would like to draw attention to a test using alcohol on the skin which may be of value in this context. All that is needed is a glass dropper with some alcohol. Holding the dropper 15 cm above the skin, one drop of alcohol is allowed to fall on the surface of the skin. If the patient has normal responses, two distinct sensations are perceived almost simultaneously. First he feels the physical contact of the drop, closely followed by a distinct feeling of coldness. If there is a lesion on the skin with definite diminution of sensation, the patient registers neither the first contact nor any feeling of coldness, though the latter may be noted if the alcohol spreads out on the skin to adjacent areas with normal sensation. Our experience is that this test dispenses with the use of hot and cold tubes, sensory testing with sharp or blunt instruments or cotton wool. As with other tests for this purpose in leprosy, it should be performed with the eyes covered.

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