

## Records

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**Doll R, Pygott F (1952)**. Factors influencing the rate of healing of gastric ulcers: admission to hospital, phenobarbitone, and ascorbic acid. *Lancet* 1: 171-175.

### Key passages

**FACTORS INFLUENCING THE RATE OF  
HEALING OF GASTRIC ULCERS  
ADMISSION TO HOSPITAL, PHENOBARBITONE,  
AND ASCORBIC ACID**

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Those in whom a benign gastric ulcer had not been confirmed in hospital by both radiography and gastroscopy and those whose clinical condition required some specific treatment—e.g., operation—were excluded from the trial. The method of treatment of the remainder was then determined by opening one of a series of sealed envelopes which had been prepared independently by a colleague and which contained, in a random order, instructions to treat the patient by one or other of the prearranged methods.

Patients in series A were treated in bed in hospital for four weeks; for the first two weeks they were given a moderately strict orthodox diet (stage 2) and for the last two weeks a more liberal one (stage 3). They were then re-examined radiographically, discharged, recommended to continue on a "convalescent" diet and advised to return to work as soon as they felt fit enough. The diets used were those recommended by Avery Jones (1949). Patients in series B were discharged immediately were treated from the outset in the way series-A patients were treated after their month's stay in hospital.

Within both series the patients were divided into subgroups of four, each member of which was allocated a random one of four drug régimes :

- (1) ascorbic acid 50 mg. t.d.s. and phenobarbitone gr. t.d.s. ;
- (2) ascorbic acid 50 mg. t.d.s. and an inert tablet t.d.s.
- (3) an inert tablet t.d.s. and phenobarbitone gr.  $\frac{1}{2}$  t.d.s. ;
- (4) two inert tablets t.d.s.

The drugs were, in each case, given daily for three months.

With this form of experimental design it is possible to assess the effects of three forms of treatment on the same group of patients. The results obtained in series A can be compared directly with the results obtained in series B, for both series are comparable in that a quarter of the patients in each received phenobarbitone, a quarter received ascorbic acid, a quarter received both, and a quarter received neither. Similarly, the patients who received phenobarbitone can be compared with those who did not, and the patients who received ascorbic acid can be compared with those who did not.