the compound in doses between 0·312 and 1·25 mg kg^{-1}. Variance analysis shows that at doses of 0·312 and 0·625 mg kg^{-1} it was significantly more active than diazepam ($P < 0·01$).

The experimental results indicate that the new compound exerts a central activity which appears to be superior to that of diazepam. Rats gave a pattern of responses similar to those seen in mice. Preliminary clinical assessment showed the drug to have activity in the treatment of minor and severe anxiety and associated symptoms.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Stability of anti-ricin serum

In view of the unsatisfactory nature of the microscopic test for castor seed, Clarke (1953) described a method of bioassay which made use of the fact that the serum from an immunised animal will neutralise the toxicity of ricin. The method is sensitive, and quite specific, but suffers from the disadvantage that few toxicological laboratories are likely to have the immune serum. It is not available commercially, needs special facilities to prepare, and is usually regarded as being comparatively unstable. There does not, however, appear to be any evidence for the latter supposition.

We have recently had occasion to test both the toxicity of a sample of ricin prepared in 1947, and the potency of some serum from a goat immunized at the same time. The former had been kept at room temperature, the latter preserved with 0·5% phenol and stored under refrigeration at 4°. Although the ricin had lost about 80 per cent of its original toxicity it still had an LD50 by intraperitoneal injection in mice of 2 mg kg^{-1}. 1 ml of the serum was still able to neutralize 8 mouse lethal doses of ricin and was thus quite potent enough to be used for the bioassay described. This means that the method is of much more practical value than was originally thought, as the serum, once obtained, can be stored in a refrigerator for many years without losing its essential efficacy.

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