and deserves more research, I would predict that after a couple of days in our unit in South East London, he would soon run out of inverted commas.

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DEAR SIRS

I agree with Dr David that the nosological status of "cannabis psychosis" is unclear. Psychotic reactions to cannabis are uncommon in Western societies despite the drugs widespread use (ARF, 1981). I am intrigued by the suggestion that the number of cases seen in Camberwell is so overwhelming – perhaps this provides a setting for the research Dr David advocates to clarify the issue. In the meantime the hard-pressed doctors of King's College could perhaps save on the use of inverted commas by applying appropriate ICD or DSM diagnoses.

As for my own interest in the subject, this stems from time spent working with the Mid-Glamorgan Community Drug Team, whose catchment area includes three of the poorest local authority districts in England and Wales and draws clients from socially disadvantaged communities whose streets are as mean as any in South-East London.

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Reference

ADDICTION RESEARCH FOUNDATION (1981) Report of an ARF/WHO scientific meeting on adverse health and behavioural consequences of cannabis use. Toronto.

The portable computer in psychiatry: tips on buying one

DEAR SIRS

We read with interest Dr Littlejohns' article (*Psychiatric Bulletin,* August 1991, **15,** 493–495) but were disappointed that no distinction was made between "palm top" (mostly personal organisers the size of a small paperback), "notebook" (usually the size of A4 paper and often weighing less than 10 lbs) and "laptop" computers (almost anything that can be lugged around in a small bag: some weigh more than "desk top" computers).

Additionally, describing the Cambridge Z88 in such detail, a rather archaic machine by today's standards, does not accurately represent the current trend in portable computers: the user is confined to miniscule memory, truly basic wordprocessing,

having to learn "Basic" (a programming language), incompatibility with so-called IBM clones and no practical way of running important software such as statistical packages. The modem set-up is fiddly.

Anyone considering portable computing should think about an IBM compatible "notebook" with a battery life of more than one and a half hours, a well lit screen and preferably an internal modem. Hard disk space would be a bonus and a working memory (loosely termed RAM) of one megabyte is usually adequate. Furthermore, most portable computers nowadays can serve quite adequately as the user's only machine. Toshiba's T1000 range, or the Sanyo MBC-17NB are rather good, and the cost can be kept down by asking for an educational discount which can be as much as 35% below the list price. Really smart buyers get their goods in the United States and still make a saving after paying their fare and accommodation: a budget of £800 would not be unrealistic. For those who really need computing, a 286 (a type of micro-processor) based machine is the best choice. Those wishing to use a Graphical Interface such as "Windows" (which makes an IBM based machine run like an Apple Mackintosh) should think hard about a 386SX (another type of micro-processor) machine. In the near future, "notebooks" will have Cellular Telephone communication facilities instead of, or in addition to, a modem fax.

Market leaders in portable computing include Toshiba, Compaq, Dell, Tandon, Zeos, NEC and Viglen: there appears to be a direct correlation between reliability (which is poorer with "notebooks" compared with "desktops") and the buyer should be cautious of very "cheap" products.

We applaud Dr Littlejohns for raising the profile of portable computing in psychiatry.

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DEAR SIRS

I attempted in this article, to state my personal requirements and show the decision process that produced a best fit solution, for me. It was not my aim to formally review portable computing.

Much computer terminology is sales talk. 'Palm-top' must be a new one, but I understood 'laptop' and 'notebook' to be synonymous, and very recent, terms. Most computers called merely 'portable' as I think Johnson and Wells sought to infer, are often quite big, with a handle on them. I, however, used the word conventionally.

The small memory of the Z88 can now be expanded to 1500k, which is reasonably excessive bearing in