Letter to the Editor
Ticarcillin-Clavulanic Acid Zone Size Criteria

In a letter to the editor (2), Sanders et al. question the interpretation of data presented by Barry et al. (1). We feel the reply by Barry and associates (2) adequately addresses the points raised by Sanders et al. and agree with Barry and associates that the relative importance of “false-resistant” disk test results is a subject of debate that would certainly affect the selection of zone size criteria for a large number of agents, not just ticarcillin-clavulanic acid.

However, we feel obliged to address the issue raised by Sanders et al. that SmithKline Beecham did not comment on the question of clinical correlation with interpretive criteria when requested to do so by the National Committee for Clinical Laboratory Standards (NCCLS) in 1990. SmithKline Beecham made a concerted effort to address this issue at the NCCLS committee meeting following the request made by the Subcommittee on Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing but was unable to do so in such a relatively short period of time because of the inability to locate enough patients treated with ticarcillin-clavulanic acid that could be considered treatment failures. After a year of intensive study with the aid of top investigators in the field, data were presented to the NCCLS in June of 1991 for consideration by the full committee. The final conclusion after a lengthy discussion by the NCCLS committee members was that there was no need to change the zone size interpretative standards. We would like to add that there was the required consensus by the designated NCCLS committee members.

We feel that the statement by Sanders et al. that SmithKline Beecham has made little attempt to provide the requested data defies the facts and ignores much effort on the part of SmithKline Beecham to present relevant information to the NCCLS Subcommittee on Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing, the committee charged with setting and reviewing interpretative standards on antimicrobial susceptibility testing. Although Sanders et al. may not agree with the decision of the NCCLS, the official minutes of the committee illustrates the cooperation between SmithKline Beecham and the NCCLS. The published NCCLS documents reflect the consensus of its members on ticarcillin-clavulanic acid zone size criteria.

REFERENCES