Correspondence

Health visitor attachments

Sir,

In the mid-summer absence of my colleagues, I am writing to welcome your review (June 1968) of three recent surveys of health visitor attachments. May I also draw your readers' attention to a later paper from Dr J. A. D. Anderson's unit which was published in the Medical Officer on 31 May 1968.* One of the hazards of carrying out work which is concerned with different branches of the health service is that one's attempts to report back to the people interested are complicated by a more than tripartite division in our journals. A limited number of reprints of this paper is available from the unit.

Our findings were very similar to those which you report in your editorial but there are two additional points which might be made. We also compared the work of health visitors working in traditional districts with those who had been working in general practice attachments for a number of years. First, the communication between health visitors and general practitioners about families (expressed as a rate per health visitor) was in the ratio of about 18:1 for the attached compared with the unattached; furthermore, half of this high rate of communication was initiated by general practitioners, and in interview it was clear that both health visitors and doctors regarded this as predominantly useful communication. The general practitioners with attachments seemed to have a better understanding of the role of the health visitor and this was reflected by an increased level of job satisfaction among the attached health visitors. Second, complaints from practitioners about the time consumed by communication were not so apparent as in some earlier surveys. Can it be that when attachments have been working for some time and there has been mutual education about roles, communication takes place much more briskly?

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*Abstracted on page 134 of this issue.

Book Reviews


This book is primarily written for health-visitor students, but it has some interest for persons who work with them. General practitioners may find the first chapter, on the history of health visiting, and the last chapter on the principles

J. ROY. COLL. GEN. PRACTIT., 1968, 16, 152