

The Training of General Practitioners in Public Health

In many countries, general practitioners are called upon to devote part of their time to public health activities. The problem of ensuring that they receive adequate training for these duties was the subject of a conference organized by the World Health Organization in October and November 1956.*

It was agreed that the first cause of indifference by general practitioners in public health matters was the lack of training in these subjects in undergraduate and postgraduate training. Another cause was thought to be the more rewarding attraction of private practice both in prestige and remuneration. To arouse and maintain the practitioner's interest in public health work, the health authorities must keep him informed of their plans of collective activities, and, whenever possible, invite his participation. Of the various ways of maintaining effective liaison between the health administration and the general practitioner recommended in the report are periodical health bulletins, personal contacts and joint meetings. Courses and seminars in which both the public health worker and the family doctor are invited to participate are said to be particularly helpful.

The present trend towards greater co-operation between these two branches of the health service was well reflected at the conference of the Royal Society of Health held at Eastbourne in May this year. In his presidential address to the conference of Medical Officers of Health, Dr H. D. CHALKE, O.B.E., medical officer of health to Camberwell Metropolitan Borough, said "team work was always necessary and the interest being taken by the College of General Practitioners and its co-operation with the Society of Medical Officers of Health in research was a good omen. He felt that conditions such as rheumatism, bronchitis, ischaemic heart disease and the multiplying virus diseases presented us with a tangled skein of causation factors not yet unravelled and were now of greater social and economic importance than the old-time infections". A distinctive feature of the whole conference was the part taken by general practitioners. Papers were read by Dr R. E. HOPE SIMPSON on "The Epidemiology of the Common Cold" and by Dr JOHN FRY on "The outpatient department and the general practitioner" and general practitioners took part in several of the discussions. This friendly exchange of experience is indeed an omen for the future. The College hope later this year to arrange a joint conference with the Society of Medical Officers of Health to discuss problems common to both. Amongst other things the training of the family doctor in public health, and the medical officer of health in domiciliary medicine will we hope be among the subjects for discussion.

*World Health Organization. Technical Report Series No. 140. p 21. (Geneva: World Health Organization). London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1957. Chalke, H. D., *Medical Officer* (1958), 99, pp. 248, 253.