

once again the Royal College of General Practitioners is arranging group travel for those who are interested. The meeting will coincide with the Annual Convention of the American Academy.

In addition, the travel agents (VIP Travel Ltd, 42 North Audley Street, London W1) will be happy to arrange visits to other parts of the United States for those who wish to extend their stay.

Because of the present favourable exchange rate for the £, it has been possible to bring down the price for the return air journey, plus 7 nights at the conference hotel (bed only), to less than £450 per person. As this is an educational exercise, those who are going might wish to discuss with their accountant the possibility of charging this as an expense for tax purposes.

MRCGP EXAMINATION

The dates for the next MRCGP examinations are as follows:

May/July 1980

Written papers: Thursday, 15 May 1980. Orals: in Edinburgh during the week ending 29 June 1980 and in London during the week ending 5 July 1980.

Closing date: 20 March 1980.

October/December 1980

Written papers: Thursday, 30 October 1980. Orals: in Edinburgh and London

during the week ending 13 December 1980.

Closing date: 4 September 1980.

The written papers will be held in London, Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Cardiff, Belfast, and Dublin. These and other centres may be used as required, subject to a minimum (and in some centres a maximum) number of candidates. It may be necessary to limit the total numbers and candidates are therefore advised to apply well in advance of the closing dates.

The application fee is £50 and the reapplication fee £25. Application forms may be obtained from the Membership Secretary at the College.

BUTTERWORTH GOLD MEDAL

The Butterworth Gold Medal is awarded for the best essay relevant to general medical practice from a list of three selected subjects. The subjects for 1980 are:

1. The general practitioner accoucheur in the 1980s.
2. The management of giddiness.
3. The case for and against specialization in general practice.

This competition is open to all fellows, members, and associates of the College. Entries, which must be in essay form, should consist of not more than 10,000

words, be typed on one side of A4 paper only, and be entered under a *nom de plume* accompanied by the author's name and address in a sealed envelope.

They should be marked 'Butterworth Gold Medal Essay Competition' and sent to the Secretary, Royal College of General Practitioners, 14 Princes Gate, London SW7 1PU.

The closing date is 31 March 1980.

UNDERGRADUATE ESSAY PRIZE COMPETITION 1980

The Royal College of General Practitioners awards three prizes of £70, £50, and £40, with an additional £10 in book tokens, to successful candidates in a competition which is open to all undergraduates of medical schools in the UK and Eire who have not yet passed their final examination.

Candidates are asked to submit an essay on a subject relevant to the practice of medicine in the community. This may take the form of an account of a clinical, epidemiological, or practice organization study associated with general practice, or a case report of patients seen in general practice.

Particulars of entry and application forms can be obtained from the Secretary, Royal College of General Practitioners, 14 Princes Gate, London SW7 1PU.

The closing date is 31 May 1980.

MEDICAL NEWS

COUNCIL FOR POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Dr S. E. Josse has been elected Chairman of the Council's Advisory Committee on General Practice in place of Sir James Cameron, who has retired as a member of the Council and its Advisory Committee.

Dr Josse is a general practitioner in North London and Regional Adviser of the North East Thames Region. He is a member of the Council of the Royal College of General Practitioners, a member of the General Medical Services Committee, and Chairman of the Joint Committee on Postgraduate Training for General Practice.

WORLD SHARK RECORD

Dr C. S. Reaves, General Practitioner, Exeter, is currently awaiting confirmation of a world porbeagle shark record which has stood since 1964. In

July 1979 whilst fishing off Padstow, North Cornwall, he caught a 196lb shark on a 30lb line. It took one and a half hours to land and Dr Reaves gaffed and roped the fish himself.

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS

The American Academy of Family Physicians reports that in a recent comprehensive survey of its active members the following findings emerged:

1. 95 per cent were engaged in the active care of patients.
2. Over 50 per cent were diplomats of the American Board of Family Practice.
3. 44.3 per cent were fellows of the American Academy of Family Practice.
4. 33.7 per cent worked in a rural setting.

These figures were obtained from a questionnaire of the 26,652 active members in the United States and achieved an 89 per cent response.

Reference

AAFP Reporter (1979). 6, No. 9, p. 1.

GENERAL PRACTITIONERS IN ENGLAND

Of the 21,040 unrestricted principals in England, 16 per cent were in single-handed practice, 20 per cent in partnerships of two, 24 per cent in partnerships of three, 19 per cent in partnerships of four, 11 per cent in partnerships of five, and 10 per cent in partnerships of six or more on 1 October 1978.

The number of elderly patients who were aged 65 or over on 31 December 1978, expressed as a percentage of all patients on the lists of unrestricted principals in England, was 14.67 per cent of the total.

The highest percentage of elderly patients was recorded in the South Western Region (17.43 per cent), which is also the region which has the lowest average list size (2,140).

Restricted services

Fewer than 300 principals now provide restricted services or have limited lists,

and the number has been decreasing steadily during the past 20 years.

Salaried assistants

The number of salaried assistants fell to less than 400 in 1978.

Trainees

The number of trainees increased by about 14 per cent to 1,280 in 1978.

Reference

Family Practitioner Services (1979). Number of general medical practitioners. 6, 189.

MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY GROUP OF GREAT BRITAIN

The Muscular Dystrophy Group of Great Britain and the Welsh National School of Medicine are holding a conference on the management of muscular dystrophy at the Welsh National School of Medicine, University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff, on Friday, 21 March 1980. Further details can be obtained from: The Muscular Dystrophy Group, Nattrass House, 35 Macaulay Road, London SW4 0QP (tel: 01-720 8055).

WINNICOTT FUND CONFERENCE

The Winnicott Fund is holding its fifth conference, "Can Human Relationships Survive in Education", on Friday, 21 March 1980, at Bedford College, Regent's Park, London. The chairman of the Conference will be Dr Martin James and speakers will include Mary Waddington, MA, PH.D and Lydia James, PSW.

Further details can be obtained from Mrs Joyce Coles, 1 Anne Mount, 44 Madeley Road, Ealing, London W5 2LU.

INTERNATIONAL MEETING

An international meeting organized by the British Association of Immediate Care Schemes, the Centre for Emergency Medicine, Pittsburgh, and the British Association of Emergency Technicians is to be held in Brighton from 22 to 25 October 1980.

Further information may be obtained

from the British Association of Immediate Care Schemes, Royal College of General Practitioners, 14 Princes Gate, Hyde Park, London SW7 1PU.

EMERGENCIES IN GENERAL PRACTICE

A course on emergencies in general practice is being held at the Post-graduate Medical Centre, Ashton Road, Lancaster, on Saturday and Sunday, 15 and 16 March 1980. Details can be obtained from the Dean of Post-graduate Medical Studies, Gateway House, Piccadilly, Manchester, M60 7LP.

CORRECTION

In the November 1979 issue of the *Journal*, Dr A. J. Mary Chisham was described as Chairman of the London Association of Medical Women's Federation. She should have appeared as Chairman of the Esher and Epsom Subgroup of the London Association of Medical Women's Federation.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DR LINDSEY BATTEN AT 90

Sir,

The first time that the audience at a James Mackenzie Lecture rose to its feet was when Lindsey Batten gave his in 1960. For style it was a *tour de force* which has been rivalled only in very recent years. But it had particular qualities that we are unlikely to witness again. Lindsey has a remarkable knowledge of literature, including Latin and Greek. He has retained his remarkable ability to quote.

It is 17 years since he retired from practice in Hampstead and from being the second Provost of the North London Faculty (Lord Stephen Taylor having been the first). His standards of practice were austere—I suspect that he was nearly always on call. If he has a special interest it is in children; for a long time he practised partly as an assistant physician at the East London Hospital for Children in Shadwell, after being a Chief Assistant in the Department for Diseases of Children at St Bartholomew's Hospital.

Perhaps this note will encourage people to read again not only Lindsey's Mackenzie Lecture (Batten, 1961) but also the lecture called "The Essence of Good Practice" (Batten, 1956) which he gave to medical students at St Barth-

olomew's Hospital; and, of course, to offer our congratulations and good wishes to him and his family.

JOHN HORDER

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2 Bartholomew Road
London NW5 2AJ.

References

Batten, L. W. (1961). The medical adviser. James Mackenzie Lecture 1960. *Journal of the College of General Practitioners*, 4, 5-18.

Batten, L. W. (1956). The essence of good practice. *Lancet*, 2, 365-368.

SCREENING FOR HYPERTENSION

Sir,

Perhaps the most worrying problem in screening for hypertension is that it labels some people as hypertensive and therefore sick. This must inevitably change their whole view of themselves. Haynes and colleagues (1978) have shown that merely labelling people as hypertensive increases their absentee rate considerably. This is the sort of evidence which it is easy to overlook but of which we should be increasingly aware.

P. R. V. TOMSON

The Group Surgery
Vine House

87 High Street
Abbots Langley
Hertfordshire WD5 0AL.

Reference

Haynes, R. B., Sackett, D. L., Taylor, D. W. *et al.* (1978). Increased absenteeism from work after detection and labeling of hypertension. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 299, 741-744.

GENERAL PRACTICE EXPERIENCE FOR HOSPITAL SPECIALISTS

Sir,

The Hertfordshire Local Medical Committee was delighted to hear that at the Annual Meeting of the Royal College of General Practitioners a motion was passed, without any votes against, that the Council of the Royal College should examine ways in which those wishing to become hospital specialists could gain experience in general practice during their postgraduate training.

The Council of the Royal College will be aware that at the Annual Representative Meeting of the British Medical Association in Glasgow in 1977, Hertfordshire LMC proposed the motion that all future specialist training programmes should include six months' experience in general practice under the supervision of a general practitioner,