

## **CLINICAL GOSSIP**

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DURING THE PAST YEAR THE East of Ireland Faculty has been running a series of monthly meetings with the title 'Clinical Gossips'. These have proved extremely popular in the faculty and other faculties might be interested in running meetings of this sort.

The object of the meetings is to allow us to air, in a relaxed atmosphere over a drink, the clinical trivia, stray thoughts, interesting cases, and so forth, which form the non-political burden of our conversation whenever we meet, but which we seldom feel are of sufficient importance to be committed to print: the conversations which begin "Have you ever thought that . . . ?". "Did you ever notice . . . ?". "I saw an old woman . . .".

We meet in a hotel and divide into groups of not more than 12—this is important—and if the meeting grows by accretion (as ours usually do, punctuality not being one of our vices), it is necessary to divide further when any group exceeds 12. Each group has a chairman, appointed for the evening, and there is a recorder who should be asked to record items of exceptional interest. The chairman invites the person on his right to make a contribution—should this person decline, the honour passes to his next-door neighbour. Each person in the group has, in turn, the opportunity to speak to each contribution and an opportunity to make an initial contribution of his own. The chairman also contributes. Medical guests, especially fellow general practitioners, are welcome. An important rule which has not been mentioned is that nobody is allowed to buy drinks for more than two others.

At the beginning of the session we have found it rewarding to ask each person to say, stating his area of practice, what infections he has seen during the past month. This might enable us, one day, to plan prospectively a virus study.

We have found that a most lively, entertaining and instructive evening follows. It has also proved to be a very good way of meeting and getting to know ones colleagues. A recent 'gossip' included discussions on hiatus hernia, the possibility of folic acid deficiency in the neonate, the therapeutic value of anger, the place of the osteopath, cancer in the aged and the demonstration of a device for venesection.