

RESEARCH NEWS

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE

The development of the Research Advisory Service has continued steadily for some years now. A recent milestone passed is the conference which was held in Birmingham at the offices which the Birmingham Regional Hospital Board generously makes available to the unit.

The purpose of this conference was to discuss screening procedures in practice and, in particular, to allow a project now running in Paignton to be examined and criticized by those who are well informed in this field. Among those present were Drs A. E. Bennett (St Thomas' Hospital), J. Bull (M.R.C. Research Unit, Birmingham Accident Hospital), J. F. Burdon (Paignton, Devon), D. L. Crombie (Director, Records and Statistics Unit, College of General Practitioners, Birmingham), K. W. Cross (Statistical Adviser Records and Statistics Unit), Dorothy Cullen (Assistant Medical Officer, Devon), J. M. Forsythe (Deputy S.A.M.O., Birmingham Regional Hospital Board), P. Freeling (Southall, Middlesex), P. M. Higgins (Castle Vale, Birmingham), E. G. Knox (Department of Social Medicine, Birmingham University), W. J. H. Lord (Alford, Lincs), D. F. Mahon (Public Health Department, Birmingham), R. J. F. H. Pinsent (Research Adviser, College of General Practitioners,) J. Scott (University of Keele), R. Smith (General Practice Research Unit, Guy's Hospital), C. M. G. Wilson and Pamela E. Aylett (Ministry of Health, London), T. P. Whitehead (Department of Biochemistry, United Birmingham Hospitals), and M. J. Whitfield (Research Assistant, Research Advisory Service). A high proportion of these experts are members of the College and are themselves engaged in research.

Dr Burdon's project is generously assisted by Devon County Council's health department and, through the help thus given, he will be able during the next few years to give an intensive medical and sociological examination to all of his patients whose ages range from 50 to 75 years. This will be a research project (as well as a service to patients) for observations as to methods, their application and their success or failure will be made as the study progresses. The results of the survey will serve more than one purpose. Dr Burdon is hoping to identify those procedures in practice which are most productive of diagnoses, and thus be able to indicate a small group of screening procedures which can be used as a diagnostic tool. He will also, of course, derive a large amount of base-line material relating to his middle-aged and elderly patients which will be available to others.

Dr Dorothy Cullen, on behalf of Dr J. Lyons (Medical Officer of Health, Devon), who was unable to attend, explained to the conference the objects of the Health Authority, which were to find out the best procedures to be applied in the retirement clinics which the County intends to institute, and also to assess the demands which are likely to fall upon

the welfare services in the years to come.

This is the first high-level conference which the College's unit at Birmingham has fostered and it is gratifying that it was attended not only by general practitioners but also by experts from the universities and from the Ministry of Health in London. Opportunity was also taken to introduce interested visitors to the Records and Statistics Unit whose offices are in the Regional Hospital Board Building. The range of activities of this unit is wide, covering special studies of the outcome of pregnancy, the influence of oral contraceptives on morbidity, as well as studies of congenital abnormalities and population genetics. The unit is also the centre from which College morbidity studies are undertaken. Methods of recording of data on morbidity at practice level are worked out and tested in a group of practices associated with the unit, and in designated special areas such as Stoke-on-Trent or the Tamar Valley.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY 900th ANNIVERSARY YEAR

Special service for science, medicine and technology

The special services being held at Westminster Abbey during the commemoration of the Abbey's 900th Anniversary Year have been planned by the Dean and Chapter to associate with this historic event as many phases as possible of the national life. One of the services now being arranged is for representatives of all those engaged in science, medicine and technology and will be held on Tuesday 18 October at 11.30 a.m.

Like other special services already held, this will be an ecumenical service, with representatives of other Christian churches taking part. Members of the government concerned with science, medicine and technology will be invited and the service will be attended by representatives of the professional bodies, the research councils, the learned societies, universities, colleges and hospitals.

An interesting feature of the service will be that an address will be given by Mr W. H. Auden, the poet—a former Professor of Poetry at Oxford—who is now resident in the United States.

Applications for tickets to the Receiver General, The Chapter Office, Westminster Abbey, before 19 September.