

Correspondence

The second world conference on general practice

Sir,

After a period when it seemed that general practice and the general practitioner were going to die out, we now have reached a stage of development when general medicine and the general practitioners seem to be coming on the scene again. The specialization and sub-specialization in medicine, which certainly are necessary and are in accordance with the modern technical and sociological development of mankind, have reached the point where the ordinary patient needs more and more the guidance of a doctor, whom he can trust with all his troubles, large and small, of body, soul and social surroundings.

International statistics have shown that a normal man in a life-time of about 65 years suffers from 1,200 health disturbances, of which 800 go away without any treatment. From the remaining 400 there are 300 smaller disturbances, which can be healed by the patients themselves or with the help of their families, but without the help of a doctor, so we have only 100 health disturbances in a life-time which need the treatment of a doctor and of these about 90 can be well treated by a general practitioner and only ten need specialist attention or hospitalization.

These statistical facts show that mankind is more healthy than one usually imagines. In these statistics we also find the explanation why the normal patient generally seeks the advice of a doctor only when two or three smaller disturbances have accumulated. He then likes to go to a doctor who is competent to treat more than one of these ailments and this is where the general practitioner is so valuable.

Modern specialization in medicine has created specialists for all organs, for many kinds of diagnostic or therapeutic techniques and for many groups of age, sex and employment (paediatricians, gynaecologists, army doctors, etc.) but we still have no specialist for the family. This could be because the general practitioner has always inconspicuously taken on the role of this important specialist combined with his other duties.

In many countries after World War II, academic bodies of general practice were founded. These colleges, academies and equivalent organizations of general practice had their first World Conference in 1964 in Montreal, Canada. It was through the initiative of the Canadian College of General Practice that the idea of a World Conference of General Practice was born, which should take place every two years. At the first World Conference many resolutions and recommendations were expressed by delegates and observers from all five continents.

The 2nd World Conference of General Practice is scheduled for 12-14 September 1966 (incl.) in Salzburg in the Main Congress Hall of this

famous city where Mozart lived and where Paracelsus, the reformer, lived and was buried. The aim of this Conference is "to project a new image of the general practitioner and to assure the public of an ever better medical service" and the main themes are as follows:

1. Advanced training in general practice.
2. Family medicine.
3. Research in general practice.
4. General practitioners as teachers and general practice at the universities.
5. World organization of general practice.

The 2nd World Conference promises to become an important event in the history of general practice all over the world. May I have the honour of inviting all colleagues from all over the world to attend this conference in Salzburg as unofficial observers.

Further information can be obtained from: The Kongress-büro, Salzburg, Auersperstrasse 2, Austria, or from the Convenor, F. Geiger, M.D., LL.D., 6433 Oetz, Tirol/Austria.

Oetz, Tyrol,
Austria.

FRITZ GEIGER, M.D., LL.D.,
Convenor: International Liaison
Committee on Colleges and
Academies of General Practice
and equivalent Organizations,
Oetz, Tyrol, Austria.

The curious art of thumb gazing

Sir,

Dr Ryde's interesting article (*J. Coll. gen. Practit*, 1966, 12, 3) draws attention once again to the importance of hypnosis in the everyday work of the family doctor. It is a pity, however, that his studies have not enabled his report to go beyond the stage of anecdote; such reports are nothing new and are inadequate to satisfy the scientifically minded of the efficacy of hypnotic suggestion as a therapeutic procedure. Family doctors have unrivalled opportunities for making controlled studies of the value of hypnotherapy in everyday practice but reports of such studies are rare.

St Mary Cray.

E. TUCKMAN.

Sir,

I would like to make some comments on the article by Dr D. Ryde "The Curious Art of Thumb Gazing" which appeared in the *Journal* in July.

It does not show the true usefulness of hypnosis in general practice.