

Editorial

REVIEW OF COUNCIL'S WORK DURING THE PAST YEAR

THE annual general meeting of the Royal College of General Practitioners, besides being the occasion when new officers and council are elected, gives the college membership an opportunity to appraise the work of its council over the preceding year. It is to this end that the chairman of council presents the annual report for consideration by the meeting.

We print here the address given by Dr George Swift. From it, members will be able to assess the work of Council and its committees.

The primary task of the college is to maintain and improve standards in general practice. To do this we must first define our standards, and, having defined them, keep them continually under review as our knowledge of clinical medicine and of methods of delivering primary medical care develops. We must provide a milieu in which these standards can be achieved, and we must be prepared to test individuals against the standards we have set. During the past year the academic committees of council have been pursuing these tasks, and a review of the whole academic function of the college is being undertaken.

Progress in the educational field has been coloured by the Todd report and the work of the central committee on postgraduate education. I must emphasize again that council is convinced of the need to establish postgraduate training of the kind envisaged. Obviously there will be much detailed planning to do, and many problems to overcome, these can and must be overcome. What is needed at the present time is an authoritative lead to proceed with planning on a national scale.

In the meantime the vocational training subcommittee of the education committee under Dr J. P. Horder continues to study the problem and will soon produce a further report. Many individual fellows and members of the college in university departments of general practice, in the faculties and with regional boards have seized on opportunities to provide training in general practice throughout the country.

The education committee, under the chairmanship of Dr P. S. Byrne, is giving high priority to a study of the best relationship with departments of general practice and postgraduate medical centres. Through the faculties we are endeavouring to identify fellows and members who will be able to act as general-practitioner tutors working with the clinical tutors of medical centres. These general-practitioner tutors must have the confidence of their colleagues and the clinical tutors with whom they will work, and they must be prepared to give a considerable amount of time to their duties. In addition, we must identify and train a considerable number of teachers of general practice who are working as principals.

Drs J. Fry and P. Freeling have been active in developing educational activities at Princes Gate, and have included several experimental courses in their extensive programme.

The Medical Recording Service, developed over the years by Drs John and Valerie Graves, has become so large, and has so many ramifications in the medical and nursing sphere, that we have decided to establish a Medical Recording Foundation. This should enable the service to continue its remarkable expansion and yet to remain under the overall control of the college.

The research organization of the college has been strengthened by the formation

of the General Practice Research Unit in Birmingham, with a strong advisory panel chaired by Dame Annis Gillie. Dr D. L. Crombie is director and Dr R. J. F. H. Pinsent research adviser to the unit. The needs of the unit in terms of bricks and mortar and equipment are being considered within the overall needs of the development of the college.

While discussing research I must make reference to the remarkable work of Dr C. R. Kay's oral contraception pill survey, in which 1,500 of you and 46,000 of your patients are involved.

The major activity of the practice organization committee this year has been an evaluation of the organizational methods used in group practices, in which all the United Kingdom faculties have been involved. This stage of the work will culminate in a conference at the College in December.

Council proposes that next year the court of examiners shall disappear and arise again under the name of the Board of Censors. This is a rational development as the examination for membership, rather than the screening machinery of the old board of censors, now dominates entry to membership.

The nature and validity of the examination is continually under review, and I should like to pay tribute to the amount of work that the examiners, particularly Dr P. S. Byrne and Dr J. D. E. Knox, have done. It is of interest that a multiple choice paper was used for the first time this November, and that 59 candidates sat the examination.

As we were instructed by the annual general meeting of 1968, a committee on fellowship, chaired by Dr G. I. Watson, has produced recommendations for discussion at this annual general meeting, which it is hoped will be acceptable to the college.

The awards and ethical committee is producing scrolls for fellowship and membership, and is studying possible designs for a fellows gown. I know that some members do not see the need for this particular pomp, but I believe that those fellows who wish to wear a gown in appropriate circumstances should be allowed to do so. Council has accepted the recommendation of the Awards Committee that an occasional award to be named 'The George Abercrombie Award' shall be established. It will be given for outstanding contributions to the literature of general practice.

During the year improvements have been made to the 'house'. Few people who do not visit the College regularly realize the great responsibility that our administrative secretary, Mrs Eileen Phillips, takes in organizing the house and the office. We are greatly indebted to her and her loyal staff.

The relationship of our college with similar institutions in this country and overseas continues to develop. The Royal College of Physicians in London has been particularly helpful with our examination, and in the recognition of posts suitable for general professional training in general medicine. We are studying the future rôle of the general-practitioner obstetrician with the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. Discussions take place regularly with the Royal Medico-psychological Association and with the British Paediatric Association.

The visit of well over 100 members to the convention of the Canadian College of Family Physicians has done much to bring our two colleges together. Council hopes that the Canadians will make a return visit to the United Kingdom, perhaps in 1973.

Members of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners will join us at our general meeting in Aberdeen next spring. I am sure that many of you will wish to attend that meeting and entertain our Australian colleagues before and after it, showing them all that is best in British general practice.