

scrutiny as counsellors do in their weekly discussions. This might well be traumatic for some doctors who, by reason of their negligible training of psychiatry and psychology generate fairly high levels of anxiety when their own methods come under scrutiny. Casualties might be expected.

#### *Further developments*

Both general practitioners and counsellors agreed with the above evaluation and it has been decided to continue with these group meetings. The further series of meetings, however, are to be based firmly in case presentations by the general practitioners who will expect and receive criticism from the counsellors as to their ways of handling marital situations in their own practices. It is hoped that they will thereby gain insight in the same way as those doctors participating in the Tavistock seminars did. Where the cases to be presented involved one of the counsellors present or the consultant psychiatrist, previous discussion is encouraged. This on-going group is now in progress and is felt to be beneficial by those six general practitioners taking part in it.

#### **Summary**

A series of meetings between general practitioners and marriage guidance counsellors has been set up in Hull. The first series were to improve communication and mutual respect. An ongoing group has been formed to take advantage of the Tavistock-like situation that arises in these groups to learn more about their own reactions to patients and some of the counselling skills of marriage guidance counsellors. It is felt that this experiment is worth publicizing as it could be applied in many areas to the benefit of doctors, counsellors and patients.

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## **RESEARCH METHODS AND STATISTICS**

### **A report on the course held at the College, 9 to 13 March 1970**

The purpose of this report is:

1. To record the structure and scope of the course.
2. To analyse its objectives.
3. To evaluate its achievements.

This was the second course of this nature held at the College and a description of its origin and precedent is given previously.<sup>1</sup>

The course comprised ten sessions, five of which were conducted by Mr G. Kalton and Mr F. Gattoni of the social statistics department at the London School of Economics, Professor K. B. Haley of the University of Birmingham Operational Institute for Engineering Production, Dr D. L. Crombie of the Records and Statistics Unit of the College, Dr J. Fry, Dr G. I. Watson and Dr B. Cooper supervised one session each. The course was attended by 23 participating doctors from all parts of the country, representing several branches of the profession and all types of practice.

#### **Content of course**

The statisticians gave an account of methods used to chart the field of morbidity, describing the logical and mathematical steps taken in developing a research project. Experimental design was discussed and the formulation and development of a hypothesis. Tests for reliability and validity were described. Methods of collecting data and their limitations were discussed, followed by a description of the statistical principles involved in data analysis and sampling procedures.

There was a brief interlude during which the computer terminal at the London School of Economics was visited, and it was learned that the work done in one hour by the computer which was seen a year ago, could now be accomplished in one minute by the present CDC 6600 machine. The prospect of computer terminals could revolutionize the present methods of recording in general practice.

In the remaining sessions, Dr G. I. Watson summarized the development of research in

general practice and the part the College has played, outlining future requirements and giving a brief but illuminating glimpse of his own work in the field of epidemiology. Dr D. L. Crombie concisely summarized the place and function of the Records and Statistics Unit in Birmingham, describing some of the methods for recording data. He stressed the advantages in co-operative group research. Professor Haley outlined the principles involved in operational research, and showed how these can be applied to complex situations, illustrating this by the construction of a mathematical model, for the evaluation of different appointment systems.

Dr J. Fry gave a bird's eye view of the field of general-practitioner research, illustrating its value in the field of the natural history of disease.

Dr R. C. Fraser outlined the origin and development of the General Practitioner Research Club, showing that it was fulfilling some of the needs expressed by research-orientated general practitioners, and Dr B. Cooper gave a most interesting historical survey of the development of epidemiology and described the use of a standardized psychiatric interview in community surveys.

#### Objectives

1. To introduce those interested in research to the principles involved.
2. To introduce practitioners entering or engaged in research to the principles established in other disciplines which have application in all research work.
3. To describe some of the problems encountered in general-practice research and show how they have been overcome, also to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas between those interested in this field.

#### Critique of course

As in the first course, the final session was devoted to a discussion and evaluation of the course itself, and it was agreed that this had been an enjoyable and instructive experience, particularly those aspects which had a direct application to general practice. The difficulties of 'going it alone' were well illustrated.

The remaining discussions embraced two main themes; they related directly to the course itself and, secondly, the whole field of research in general practice. It was agreed that the present course had succeeded in offering a balanced mixture of technical and non-technical advice presented by general practitioners and non-medical experts catering for the novice as well as for the experienced investigator. It was felt that printed summaries of some of the lectures would have been helpful and that in some cases the presentation might have been improved. The pre-course instructions might have been more comprehensive, indicating a basic reference for each subject. Some of the more complex graphs would have been easier to comprehend had they been shown in slide form. The discussion of more projects at all stages of completion and the analysis and criticism of existing completed research projects would have been instructive.

More generally, the need for explanation in the basic methods of research was expressed, and an expert acting in a tutorial capacity would be welcomed. Short summaries of techniques employed, either designed for audio-visual presentation or in pamphlet form, would be most valuable. A demonstration of the aids available to research workers, possibly in a section of the college library, was requested. If tapes covering some of the methodology discussed in this course were available through the College, this would be most valuable to those unable to attend in person, and also for revision purposes.

One idea expressed was for an alternative choice in speakers so that a smaller, more informal group could be formed, although in general the balance between formality and informality was nicely achieved. Some of these needs are being met by the development of the Research Club; others could best be fulfilled by extending existing college facilities.

Those present requested more information about the whole field of general-practitioner research. This suggested that communication in this field is inadequate. There is a need for co-ordination, administration and education which is only partially met at present.

H. R. PATTERSON

#### REFERENCE

Fraser, R. C. (1969). *Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners*. 17, 385.

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