

The College museum

Sir,

The letter in "College News" from Dr Peter Thomas, honorary curator of the College museum, prompts us to write to you to tell you of a small collection of old instruments which we have in the North Eastern Faculty.

This collection was started some three or four years ago and, indeed, a small display has been available to the public until very recently, for something like the last year. This display was in a glass show case and was prepared for the purpose of a demonstration at a peripheral clinical meeting held at West Lane Hospital, Middlesbrough. This display was also exhibited for a short time to the public in Newcastle-upon-Tyne until it found its permanent resting place at the Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle. Whilst on display there it was the subject of a small item of news on local television.

It has now been closed and packed up, preparatory to its move to Beamish Hall, Co. Durham, the site of the new North of England Regional Open-air Museum, the first of its kind in Europe.

It was indeed the public interest in the project of the proposed North of England Regional Museum, and the help of Mr Frank Atkinson, F.S.A., which prompted us in the North Eastern Faculty to start our collection of instruments. Like the college collection, ours belongs to the 19th and early 20th centuries. In future months, preparations will be made for the exhibiting of a part of our collection at the new North of England Regional Museum, at Beamish Hall.

H. MADGWICK, K. H. PICKWORTH,
Honorary Secretary, Honorary Collector,
North Eastern Faculty. North Eastern Faculty.

Present state and future needs of general practice

Sir,

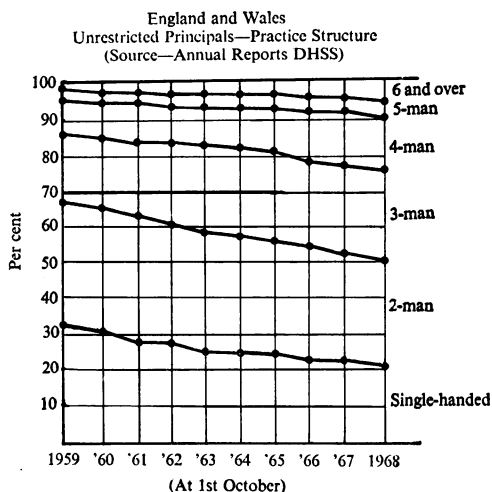
In a letter published in your August issue, Dr T. E. A. Carr of the Department of Health and Social Security draws attention to an item of rather misleading information contained in this report, which was published earlier this year. At the end of his letter, Dr Carr commends the report as a whole as being 'first class'. This view—appearing as it does just above Dr Carr's office address—might suggest to the less knowledgeable reader, and in particular those overseas, that the content of the report has now received the official seal of approval.

Lest this should be the case, I am prompted to draw attention to two other places in the document where I believe its authors have given us "mal-presentations" of the information which they so diligently collated—each of which could mislead.

My first such criticism relates to the matter appearing in chapter 2 (pages 5, 6 and 7) which deals with changes in what the annual reports of

the Health Departments call 'practice structure'—or the size of groups and of partnerships. At the top of page 7 there is a statement that the trend towards larger groups has been speeded by group practice grants (*sic*). A line or two later there is a similar reference to the fall in the proportion of single-handed practitioners as being 'dramatic'. On the opposite page (6) eye-catching visual support is given to this argument by a histogram—appearing under table II—in which a bold block, reminiscent of a new office block, demonstrates an 83 per cent increase in the number of practices of six or more members, as between 1961 and 1968. A slightly smaller skyscraper shows the 60 per cent increase for the number of doctors in groups of five members.

If one examines the state of 'practice structure', and the figures in the annual reports, the result can be expressed rather differently, so far as effect is concerned:



Whereas in 1961, 24 doctors in every 1,000 worked in groups of six and six plus, by 1968 this number had increased to 43; for five-man groups the figures are 38 and 60 respectively. In other words, in 1961 more than 950 principals were in groups of four, three and two, or single-handed; seven years later this figure was just under 900.

I have attempted to express the trend towards larger groups so that it can be taken in at a glance (*see* figure). It will at once be seen that over a decade there has been a trend, but to say that it has noticeably been 'speeded' by the introduction (in 1966) of group practice allowances is I believe to misuse that word; there has been recently a slight accentuation of the gradient of the long established trend. Even so, in 1968 (the last published figures available) about three quarters of all principals were in groups of three or two, or single-handed, and those in groups of five, six and