

RESEARCH FOUNDATION BOARD

At its last meeting on 12 February 1971, the board elected Dame Annis Gillie to the chairmanship. On behalf of the board, she welcomed to his first meeting, Mr Kenneth Robinson, former Minister of Health. It was agreed that, because of his increasing commitments Dr E. V. Kuennsberg, hon. secretary and treasurer, should be assisted by Professor J. D. E. Knox who would act as secretary, while he remained as treasurer.

The board received reports concerning ongoing projects and approved grants for seven additional applicants. The board is always willing to advise doctors concerning applications for grants to initiate research, and a booklet is available free of charge setting out the terms and conditions of such grants. Those interested should write to the Secretary, Research Foundation Board, 14 Princes Gate, London, S.W.7.

COLOUR CODING OF N.H.S. MEDICAL CARDS

Cards giving details and instruction for the College's system of colour tagging of eight important disease groups are again available at 12½p for six, from the Librarian, 14 Princes Gate, London, S.W.7.

EPIDEMIC OBSERVATION UNIT*Myocardial infarction (International Study)*

Will doctors who are taking part in this survey please note that the questionnaire should not be returned to this unit for 12 months unless the patient subsequently died.

Any doctor, who has not yet offered to join this study group and who would like to do so, should mark the notification form accordingly at the end of this *Journal*. This is a

prospective study, originally described in *Journal* No. 99, (1970 20, 232), and further volunteers are welcome.

MEDICAL RECORDING SERVICE**New titles recently added to the service and available on tape or cassette**

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| 70-63 | Management of asthma in the child | 29 minutes | 16 illustrations |
| 70-97 | Developmental examination at 2 years of age | 35 minutes | 48 illustrations |
| 70-100 | Developmental examination at 3 years of age | 38 minutes | 48 illustrations |
| 71- 1 | The doctor comes by air | 28 minutes | 19 illustrations |
| 71- 3 | The young smoker | 29 minutes | |
| 71- 5 | William Hunter's incunabula | 22 minutes | 22 illustrations |
| 71- 8 | Developmental examination at 18 months of age | 35 minutes | 48 illustrations |
| 71-13 | LSD | 21 minutes | |
| 71-15 | Drugs in Britain today | 27 minutes | |

Complete catalogue available from the Medical Recording Service Foundation, Kitts Croft, Writtle, Chelmsford, Essex. CM1 3EH on receipt of a cheque for 50p.

In Memoriam

A. S. BOYD, Hillsborough, Co. Down
A. B. DAVIES, Walsall, Staffs
WILLIAM GLASGOW, Elie, Fife

REPORT**HIPPOCRATIC PLANE**

IN A DELIGHTFUL WAY THE College has become involved in a happy horticulto-hippocratic venture. Last December the Council received a report that Professor Gibson of Vancouver, a medical historian, was offering 1,500 trees . . . Well . . . no . . . One must begin at the beginning. That is over 2,000 years back.

On the island of Cos in the Dodecanese (and near Turkey, though really it is Greek) stands an enormous old plane tree, forty-six feet in circumference. It is said that under this tree Hippocrates taught his students what was the first scientific approach to medicine. A venerable tree then, to be respected. Professor Gibson describes how in summer it is a high-domed mass of greenery, and in the winter it looks like the vascular system of the kidney.

On the island there also stand the ruins of the Asklepiion; this was the centre devoted to worship, to health, and to the arts. It was here that patients came to seek healing.

Today Professor Spiros Oeconomos, an elderly but intensely energetic surgeon, has been organizing and encouraging the building of the International Hippocratic Foundation—a meeting centre for medical societies, a practical gesture to the ideal of internationalism in medicine. The construction is coming towards its conclusion, but is hampered by lack of funds.

Now from the tree come many seeds. Of value? Yes! Some were sent to Vancouver and here they were cultivated. Seedling plane trees grew up. Not only are these young trees tinged with the hippocratic aura, but they are of the oriental plane (*Platanus orientalis*) which is unlike our ordinary English or London plane, has a nicer leaf and colours in the autumn. Very generously Professor Gibson offered the seedlings to the College, which is extremely glad to get them looked after and sell them to garden enthusiasts among medical men and organizations, and to send the proceeds to the funds of the International Hippocratic Foundation. Arrangements were made with the manager of a large nursery at Cambridge which would look after the seedlings and help with the sale of the trees. Important formalities with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries were completed. Soon after came the news that Professor Gibson was flying from Vancouver with many 100 trees. This gave awesome visions of an afforested Jumbo Jet labouring over the North Pole. What was needed over here? True, these were only seedlings but would a couple of lorries suffice? How many porters and trolleys should be lined up?

Professor Gibson reached Cambridge in March and strode down the station platform with something like a small shoe box under one arm. Here they all were, packed so tight together that, so to speak, one could not see the trees for the wood. Within the box were many hundreds of these charming little things about the size of a large match stick, with fine, hair-thin roots and all looking extremely healthy. They were brought to the nursery where the manager received them with care and set about their cultivation—in peat at first, and then into a nursery field.

One tree, isolated from its fellows, was planted (in a pot) at the College premises, a pleasant little formality where the guests included Professor Gibson and His Excellency the Greek Ambassador. The Ambassador had actually sent instructions to Greece that two kilograms of Athenian soil be sent by air (in the diplomatic bag?) for this purpose. By a typist's error on the decimal system, he explained, he had received 20 kilograms, so there was a bit of a margin for error.

The situation now is this. In a few months the College will be offering these unusual, indeed unique, living reminders of the doctor who was the Father of Medicine, for our gardens. The trees grow very quickly indeed and will be a good size for planting out this autumn. *Platanus orientalis* has proved tough and hardy, and should cope with our winters without any trouble.

At this stage it has not yet been possible for the nursery to cost the matter. However it is estimated that the charge for each tree will be in the order of two or three pounds. This should allow a worthwhile donation to the very worthwhile International Hippocratic Foundation. Full details will be issued later. Anyone who wishes to reserve his tree now can do so by writing to the College.

REFERENCES

- Gibson, W.C. 1966. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, **197**, 110.
 Gibson, W.C. 1970. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*. **102**, 33.

A. S. PLAYFAIR
 Cambridge.
