

temperamentally unsuited to the experience of learning in a workshop, are also unsuited to the strains imposed by the role of the teacher in general practice.

The number of workshops is increasing because they meet a real need. Many are producing reports from their meetings and these record the journey of discovery which each individual group is making. As well as enthusiasm for general practice, and the desire to teach the future general practitioner, we are becoming aware of the dimensions of the educational task before us. The workshops are emerging as a significant method of learning about teaching.

REFERENCE

1. *Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners*, (1969). **18**, 358.

GENERAL PRACTITIONER TEACHERS

THE College has said time and again that the quality of teachers (*see* Council report) and their practices will be a crucial factor in the success of vocational training for general practice. In the important policy document published today, Council strategy is clarified. High standards of clinical competence and patient care, and a professional approach to teaching are to be the qualities expected of teachers and their practices. Simultaneously, teaching practices must be properly paid for their new responsibilities.

The trainee scheme, within which the general practice component of vocational training now takes place, is obsolescent and will soon pass into history. It is worth reflecting on its successes and failures, to learn for the future. Conceived within narrower educational aims than are acceptable today, it nevertheless set out to give young doctors a good start to a career in general practice by placing them for a year with a carefully chosen trainer. Many practitioners will recall this early learning experience with satisfaction; unfortunately, even more will remember that their service value as trainees seemed to be more important to their principals than training. There are two main reasons for this haphazard variation. First, many trainer appointment committees have failed to apply the sound selection criteria of the British Medical Association; secondly, no co-ordinated, systematic effort has been made by local medical committees adequately to evaluate the training given by the practices for which they are responsible, or to correct deficiencies revealed by trainees themselves. These weaknesses are significant. Defining ideal criteria is one thing; seeing that they are implemented quite another. Any new organisation must be given sufficient teeth to ensure that standards are met and evenly applied, if young doctors are to get a square deal from teaching practices in the future.

It is helpful to look at the new administration of vocational training, as it unfolds, to see how effective it could be. Regional postgraduate committees will be responsible for the organisation of vocational training through their general practice advisory committees. General practice advisory committees, now becoming established throughout the country, will have a majority of general practitioner members representative of both the College and local medical committees, and will have executive support from the office of the Regional Adviser in general practice. In time, they should cease to be advisory and assume administrative charge, when the trainee scheme is wound up. regional postgraduate committees will receive advice on general practice training from two sources; first, the Council for Postgraduate Medical Education, and its general practice advisory committee comprising members representing the College and the

General Medical Services Committee; secondly the College itself, which will approve vocational training schemes for the M.R.C.G.P. examination.

Council's proposals for teachers should be seen against this background. They take account of new data on teaching practices from various schemes, especially North-East England and Manchester. With one exception, all the recommendations have been agreed by the liaison committee of the College and the General Medical Services Committee, and the general practice advisory committee of the Council for Postgraduate Medical Education. Difficulty has arisen as to whether there should be a right of appeal against the decision of an appointment committee for teachers. This is now the subject of further discussion.

It is encouraging to see Council taking an interest in the financial as well as the academic aspects of training. Such an interest does not necessarily imply that the College is becoming 'political'. Rather it reflects the fact that the College has more data on costs and teaching time than do other bodies at present. Indeed, the paper rightly emphasises the primary responsibility of the General Medical Services Committee for matters concerning the remuneration and conditions of service of teachers.

Finally, the College's main obligation to the public, young doctors in training, and practitioners themselves is stated quite clearly. "It proposes that it should assume responsibility for advising on standards in teaching practices . . . and continue its policy of approving vocational training schemes for general practice, for the purpose of its membership examination". Every young doctor has the right to expect of regional postgraduate committees that the courses of vocational training they offer have been so recognised.

Spring Meeting

The Spring meeting of the College will be held in Liverpool on 7-9 April 1972. There will be a civic reception at the Town Hall, Liverpool at 20.00 hours on 7 April. On the following day there will be a symposium "Advances in Treatment" chaired by Lord Cohen and Lord Rosenheim. The speakers will include Professor A. C. Kennedy, Dr I. Greig and Professors D. J. Wetherall, C. A. Clark and J. D. E. Knox.

There will be a reception and faculty dinner on Saturday evening and a programme for visiting ladies and children during the day on Saturday. The William Pickles lecture will be delivered by Dr R. P. Maybin on Sunday 9 April, his subject being "Health centres and the family doctor". Ample accommodation is available in halls of residence but hotel accommodation is expected to be limited. Members attending should apply immediately to the organising secretary, Waterside Lodge, Barrel Well Hill, Chester.