

for the future must lie in a strong College linked with strong departments. It is to be hoped that these will soon appear in every medical school and indeed in other universities as well.

The university departments of general practice are now an accepted feature of the medical scene. They represent a further step in what Hunt (1957), in his Lloyd Roberts lecture, called "the academic renaissance of general practice that is taking place throughout the world".

Historians in the future will however see the early 1970s as being only the beginning of a major new development in general practice.

#### REFERENCE

Hunt, J. H. (1957). *British Medical Journal*, 1, 1075.

## REQUIEM FOR A REGISTER

**T**HE research committee of Council agreed in March 1972 to recommend that the research register be closed. The decision came after discussion and reminiscence, and an objective appraisal of how the register now served the need for which it was created. Perhaps to everyone's surprise it became clear that the need no longer existed.

Within months of the foundation of the College the embryo research committee sought to find out who, if anyone, in general practice was interested in research. One advertisement was placed in one issue each of *The Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal*, inviting contact with the research committee. From this single advertisement a register grew which at its zenith numbered over 800 people.

The size of the response was unexpected but, when the trickle swelled to a stream, a structured proforma was prepared and sent to all who joined. This called for information on experience and interests, which respondents were asked to specify, and for freehand descriptions of practice circumstances and opportunities. Ledgers were prepared in triplicate, one set being held at the College, another at Peaslake and a third in Birmingham. Carbon-copy amendments were made from time to time and as the register grew so did the work it entailed.

The appointment of a registrar became an urgent necessity, a post held at various times by the late E. A. W. Marien, Arthur Watts, Elizabeth Watts, Ronald Griffiths and Marshall Marinker, to all of whom, and others yet besides, the College owes a great debt. Their work brought together a group of people who at the beginning had no more than enthusiasm and interest to their credit. Membership of the register gave them—gave us all—a kind of confidence. We were no longer individuals alone and isolated in our belief that there could be a worthwhile research component in our work. For the first time, as details of new entrants to the register, with addresses and a synopsis of their interests appeared in the *Research Newsletter*, doctors could get in touch with one another. Ideas could be exchanged, correspondence begun and group studies on a common theme became a practical proposition.

From a ledger the register became a Cope-Chat file. This did not work as well and the updating problem was immense. It is in the very nature of general practice that interests change and change again. In turn the register took shape as an addressograph file held at Princes Gate in the gentle care of Mrs Phillips who kept it up to date as best

she could from information gathered piecemeal, or through questionnaires circulated by the registrars. This was its final form. It had begun as a simple list and metamorphosed to some degree of automation but as it grew in sophistication so the need for it diminished.

In the early days there was little published work and no *Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners*. Now there is plenty—and the bibliography so comprehensively prepared, maintained and amended by the college Librarian is a better index to the work practitioners have done. Then there were no meetings, no symposia where practitioners could meet, there were no postgraduate centres, no college courses, and university departments of general practice were far below the horizon.

The register was created by amateurs, for amateurs, and in its time it served them well. So far as is known no other research organisation or academic body works in this way. Perhaps it was only appropriate to the stumblings of an amateur organisation towards a more professional and conventional maturity.

There may, one day, be some small ceremony at the College when the Chairman of the research committee of Council will present twin looseleaf ledgers, bound in green, to the college archivist. These will be laid up as a regiment lays up its colours, and a chapter in the history of research in medicine and in general practice in particular, will finally be closed.

## INTERNATIONAL GENERAL MEDICINE

THE first issue of a new international journal of general practice called *International General Medicine* has appeared. This is the official organ of the Societas Medicinæ Generalis (I.G.A.M.) and has been designed to assist the exchange of information between general practitioners in different parts of the world and to link the achievements of the academic centres of general practice in many different countries. Its first editorial states that it intends to provoke and criticise and calls on all general practitioners to assist by providing information and material.

The first issue contains translations of papers in German, English and French and includes reports of general practitioners' work including one summary from *The Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners*.

The editorial board contains 16 members from 16 different countries. These include Drs J. McKnight from Northern Ireland and D. J. Pereira Gray from Great Britain.

*The Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners* was one of the first academic journals of general practice, so we particularly welcome this new international development and send our good wishes to the editor, Dr Eckart Sturm, of Germany.

Although there are striking differences in the organisation of general practice in many different countries of the world, many of the underlying principles and problems are common. Much can be learned from the interchange of ideas. A new international journal may well help to break down communication barriers between countries.

The first issue contains greetings from the President of the Royal College of General Practitioners, Dr G. I. Watson, who writes "The Royal College of General Practitioners greets the first appearance of *International General Medicine* and wishes this new publication every success".

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