

REPORTS

International Hospital and Health Services Exhibition

This has been an annual event at Earl's Court for many years, but this year for the first time it widened its terms of reference to Health Services generally, not just to hospitals.

The Medical Recording Service Foundation was urged by the Department of Health to take a stand there, because it is becoming a large British medical exporting service. With some trepidation, we agreed, and an exhibit including a Marler-Haley ten-panel display stand, a carrel with cassette-player and projector in action, an automatically changing series of slides on a Mira-Screen, and an ample supply of literature, was provided.

We have often manned exhibits at meetings before—sometimes quite large events such as the International Leprosy Conference and the British Orthopaedic Association Annual Meeting, but Earl's Court is on quite a different scale. There are many formalities to be completed, and one is obliged to use official services such as electrician and transport. We were warned that if we so much as raised a screwdriver the entire building would come out on strike, which I believe is not an uncommon occurrence!

Our first rude contact with the facts of life came within two hours of setting up the stand (fortunately before the actual opening) when two cassette-players were stolen. Other stands suffered more severe losses and we left nothing portable unwatched after that.



Mrs F. Fontana (centre) at the stand of the Medical Recording Service Foundation.

The exhibition lasted from 6-9, June and hundreds of visitors came to the stand, some just to look, but many to collect literature and make enquiries. Many were from overseas, mostly from hospitals. The stand aroused a good deal of attention, partly because the other stands were selling equipment (from complete laundries to paper bags); partly because the exhibit had some arresting pictures, but to a very large extent because of the constantly changing picture show.

The slides shown were all from our teaching slide sets and included pictures of a health visitor calling on a problem family, handicapped and limbless children, a public health inspector sampling milk, and aged people at home. Passers-by found the slides quite fascinating and could not tear themselves away. Few had ever seen pictures at all like these.

Mrs Fontana, who is our expert on sales, attended the exhibition every day. I was there on two days and other members of the library, recording and illustration staff took their turn.

Unless one has worked at a big exhibition it is difficult to know how exhausting and stressful it is, explaining the same thing hour after hour to hundreds of total strangers, many of whom have come to look at new beds and carpets and are not at all interested in teaching.

We think that it was a worthwhile exercise. We have had a glimpse into the immense ramifications of hospital administration and purchasing, and shown a number of people who had never given general practice a thought in their whole lives, that it does have some relevance to their work. We have seen that some hospital equipment could be useful in the surgery.

Above all, we have made many useful new contacts, some of whom we hope will use our services but all of whom have gone home with information about the Royal College of General Practitioners and its activities.

JOHN GRAVES

The Alcoholic in general practice

A full-day symposium on the diagnosis and management of the alcoholic in general practice was held on 7 May, 1972 at the Manchester Business School. It was organised by the Department of General Practice at Manchester University, in association with the North-west England Faculty of the Royal College of General Practitioners, and the Medical Council on Alcoholism.

The participants were welcomed by Dr M. T. Sweetman, Provost of the Faculty, and the morning session on diagnosis was chaired by Professor N. Kessel, Department of Psychiatry, University of Manchester.

Lord Rosenheim

The opening address was given by Professor Lord Rosenheim, who is Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Medical Council on Alcoholism. Alcoholism was causing more misery and actual illness in Britain than drugs such as cannabis, heroin and LSD which received more publicity. It can be combated only by the community at large recognising it as an illness.

Alcoholism has serious consequences not only for the alcoholic himself but for his wife and family. The illness was one of the main causes of psychiatric disturbance amongst children who were brought up in homes where there were alcoholics. Early treatment is essential, and the general practitioner who is in the frontline must detect the alcoholic amongst his patients. There is a need for education of undergraduates, general practitioners, consultants, and the general public. The community must be educated to demand treatment.

Dr R. Wilkins

Dr Rodney Wilkins, Lecturer in the Department of General Practice at Manchester University emphasised the need for detective work by the family doctor to find early cases.

For one year, the general practitioners at Darbshire House Health Centre invited patients, aged 15-65 years, who were believed to be 'at risk' to being an alcoholic, or a close relative of one,