

Generalists

At present most general practitioners are having to learn about literature and drama after they have qualified as doctors, but it is encouraging that some, like Marinker (1973) are beginning to quote and use the language of literature in their medical writing. His 1972 Gale Memorial lecture is one notable example, and interestingly Swayne, in his reply today, also (and perhaps inevitably) uses artistic analogies.

We publish today two other articles about the arts to illustrate this theme. Tomson lists a series of non-medical books which show how literature helped him, and we hope may well help others, to understand more deeply some of the topics covered and Mrs Lesley Ricketts, a music therapist, in one of the first reports of its kind, shows how the use of music may be a key to communicating with and aiding the development of some handicapped children.

Is the wheel of history turning again? From the seventeenth century onwards the hallmark of the physician was that he was an educated man. It was then accepted, perhaps uncritically, that knowledge of the arts was a prerequisite for the training of the doctor and the treatment of disease. After half a century of ever-increasing emphasis on scientific knowledge, are the physicians of the future beginning to refresh their minds from the classics?

Could it be that the role of the generalist may not be merely to abstract and integrate the world of medical science and interpret it for the benefit of his patients, but perhaps to abstract also from the arts some of the subtle messages which can enrich our lives?

Dangerous dichotomy

We believe that the choice between arts or science is a false and dangerous dichotomy. In many aspects of the doctor/patient relationship knowledge and understanding of drama, literature, and philosophy can greatly help understanding. In the meanwhile a good start can be made in redressing the balance in education by using the arts as aids to learning.

REFERENCE

Marinker, M. L. (1973). *Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners*, 23, 83-94.

AN AGREEMENT IN EUROPE

ONE of the earliest tasks of the College of General Practitioners was to find an acceptable definition of a general practitioner. We owe the earliest to Lord Hunt (1957, 1972) who produced a short definition which proved useful in many contexts.

Increasing educational activity made a need for a more detailed definition of the general practitioner's job. Without this there was no firm base on which to build educational programmes. Training to do what?

The Department of General Practice at the University of Manchester provided a definition of the job which, in essence, has stood the test of use since it first appeared in a supplement to this *Journal* (Royal College of General Practitioners, 1969). It re-appeared in a slightly modified form in *The Future General Practitioner—Learning and Teaching* (Royal College of General Practitioners, 1972). In this book, it was translated into broad educational aims and objectives. What should the trained general practitioner be able

to do and what should he be able to demonstrate that he has learned? These educational expressions helped clear thinking and prepared the way for testing whether learning had actually taken place. But they have not yet entered common parlance, even among the College membership.

Educational aims, like scientific theories, are subject to constant modification. A revised definition of the general practitioner's job and revised educational aims have now been published by a working party from 11 European countries (Leeuwenhorst Working Party, 1975). These aims show the British College's influence throughout, but they may be seen as an improvement because they are better balanced than the earlier version, which showed an intentional bias towards the psychological and social aspects of medicine.

These European aims now appear in a small pamphlet entitled *The General Practitioner in Europe*, published on the authority of the working party. The members were interested individuals who happened to be invited to a conference on training organised by the Dutch College of General Practitioners in 1974; they were not appointed representatives either of their country or of their College.

It proved surprisingly easy to secure agreement, even though two of the members were from East European countries, one from Yugoslavia, two from Scandinavia and others from Austria, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, West Germany and the United Kingdom.

An advantage of the new version is in the small size of the document. A fault is in its omission of any direct reference to human development. A limitation is that 11 countries by no means compose the whole of Europe.

The document has already prospered. It was accepted by the Board of U.E.M.O. (the organisation representing general practitioners in the European Economic Community) for submission to the European Commissioners in Brussels. Here it may play a part in achieving the recognition of general practice as a special branch of medicine. More recently, it was accepted by the Council of the Royal College of General Practitioners as a statement of college policy. It is now being distributed by the World Health Organisation to the governments of all 32 countries in the European region of the organisation.

REFERENCES

- Hunt, J. H. (1957 and 1972). *The Renaissance of General Practice*. Lloyd Roberts Lecture. *British Medical Journal*, **1**, 1075–1082 and *Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners*, **22**, suppl. No. 4.
- Leeuwenhorst Working Party (1975). *The General Practitioner in Europe*. Pamphlet published by the Working Party.
- Royal College of General Practitioners (1969). *Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners*, **18**, 358–360.
- Royal College of General Practitioners (1972). *The Future General Practitioner—Learning and Teaching*. London: *British Medical Journal*.

Addendum

The pamphlet *The General Practitioner in Europe* can be obtained from the headquarters of the College, 14 Princes Gate, Hyde Park, London, SW7 1PU.
