

# National Conference of Postgraduate Advisers in General Practice of the UK

**A**T the December 1976 Conference in London of the Postgraduate Advisers of the UK, continuing education again became a matter for some anxiety. In the last report (January *Journal* p. 52) it was noted that a memorandum advocating appointments to districts of general practitioners with educational expertise for continuing education in parallel with the course organizer appointments had been discussed. The Conference of Postgraduate Deans had not had enough time to discuss this adequately, and it was referred back to them from this Conference. The advisers are unanimous in their belief that the expansion of professionalism in the continuing education programme is essential to consolidate and advance the improved training that new entrants to general practice are now receiving.

A closely allied problem is the allocation of Section 63 moneys. There was a risk that the continued expansion of academic courses for vocational training could jeopardize the funding of the continuing education programme. Some advisers are therefore advocating separate funding of the two programmes and a working party has been set up to study the problem.

A recurring theme at these meetings is the changing base of undergraduate education and the marked variability between medical schools in the curriculum. It is clear that many schools, for example, are reducing practical obstetric experience, and the role of the future general practitioner in obstetrics continues to be a

matter for debate. To join the obstetric list a practitioner has to fulfil certain training criteria and, as the obstetric scene changes so must these criteria change.

The Vocational Training Act is now on the statute book but regulations under the Act are still the subject of negotiations between the Department of Health and the profession. In particular the possibility of phasing the introduction of training by introducing a mandatory year in a training practice before the date fixed for the full three-year requirement is being strongly advocated by several advisers. They foresee a possible deterioration of standards between now and the 1980 mandatory training date if there is to be no phasing.

Meanwhile the Joint Committee on Postgraduate Training for General Practice continues to organize visits to regions, in which each adviser is an occasional host and most are also occasional visitors. The Committee had provided the advisers with a selection of recommendations taken from a wide range of visitors' reports, which were received with great interest and provoked lively debate. Visitors have come in for some criticism but they have been functioning for only a short time and the Joint Committee are as aware as the advisers that we are all learning about coping with the problems as we go along.

DOUGLAS PRICE  
*Secretary to the Conference*