

HEALTH EDUCATION COUNCIL

The Health Education Council has recently issued two leaflets free of charge, entitled, *Healthy Eating for your Children* and *The Overweight Child*. These can be obtained from The Health Education Council, 78 New Oxford Street, London WC1A 1AH.

OUT-OF-HOURS CALLS

The Standing Committee on Emergency Calls of the World Organization of National Colleges and Academies of General Practice has concluded as follows: "The Committee defined an emergency as any call for treatment from a patient or interested party which can reasonably be interpreted by the doctor as requiring immediate attention to the exclusion of any activity he may be performing.

"The Committee recognized that different countries and communities have different health care systems and circumstances and that these would obviously dictate what emergency services would be available. Nevertheless it was felt that emergency care was part and parcel of the duties of the general practitioner/family physician and that the services should be undertaken and directed by him as part of his service to his patients."

Reference

WONCA News (1977). 4, No. 3, 2.

NHS

Planned total expenditure on the NHS in 1978/79 is £5,762m gross and £5,613m net of estimated income from charges.

The corresponding figures in 1977/78 are £5,700m gross and £5,546m net, and the corresponding charge in 1976/77 was £5,665m gross and £5,526m net.

POOR FAMILIES

There were 120,000 families in Britain in December 1975 in which the head of the family was employed in full-time work and where the family's net income was below the appropriate supplementary benefit level.

It is estimated that there were about 90,000 such families where the head was self-employed part-time or full-time.

RENTS IN LONDON

The average weekly rent for a three-bedroomed council house in London in early 1977 was estimated at about £7.

HEALTH SERVICE MANAGEMENT COSTS

The Secretary of State for Wales, Mr John Morris, has announced that all health authorities in Wales are being asked to reduce expenditure on management so that by 1979/80 they will be spending five per cent less on this than last year.

NHS CONSULTANTS

The value of distinction awards and the number of consultants in receipt of each class of award in England and Wales are as follows:

Class	Amount	Number receiving
A +	£10,689 p.a.	113
A	£ 8,109 p.a.	422
B	£ 4,761 p.a.	1,205
C	£ 2,025 p.a.	2,718

UNIVERSITY APPLICATIONS

The number of applications to read medicine at British universities has fallen from a peak of 13,003 in 1974 to an estimated total for 1976 of 12,096.

When 'A' level results are scored as A5, B4, C3, well over half the successful candidates scored between 13 and 15.

WORLD RHEUMATISM YEAR

The British League Against Rheumatism is hoping to sponsor closer liaison between established bodies in this field and general practitioners with an interest in rheumatic diseases. The League would like to hear of practitioners who hold clinical assistantships or similar posts in departments of rheumatology or physical medicine and those with a particular interest in their own practices.

Those interested are requested to write to Dr D. G. Wilson, 19 Chiltern Avenue, Bushey, Watford WD2 3PU.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ANONYMOUS LETTERS

The Editor welcomes the increase in the number of letters being received for publication in the *Journal* but reaffirms that correspondents are asked to give their names and qualifications (see *Editorial Notice*).

Anonymous letters are being received and these will not be accepted for publication.

PARENTS FOR CHILDREN

Sir,
We feel that general practitioners and specialists in all branches of medicine will want to know of the existence of a

new home-finding agency serving handicapped children. Parents for Children was founded in October 1976 with the help of a grant from the Department of Health and Social Security and other trust funds in order to specialize in finding adoptive families for older children in care and for those with mental or physical handicaps.

There is enough evidence to show that families can be found for both older and handicapped children if the time and skill is available, and further evidence that family care is a better preparation for life than an institutional upbringing. Based on these premises, Parents for Children is setting out to demonstrate what kind of service is needed to find the right families to prepare the children, and to support both in their life together.

The agency takes a flexible approach to parenthood, trying to identify those

people in the community who have something special to offer such children. The children themselves are mostly out of the ordinary and it is to be expected that many of the families who can look after them may be out of the ordinary too. Age, religious affiliation, and even marital status are not the most important criteria—commitment, understanding of the children's special needs, patience, and a sense of humour probably are.

A simultaneous research programme is being carried out by the National Children's Bureau to study the methods of work and follow up the outcome.

The children are being referred by local authorities in the London and South-East areas, and families are being drawn from a radius of 100 miles of London. The staff consists of four qualified and experienced social workers and two secretaries. The first

child has just been placed in a family—a seven-month old mongol baby.

We hope that the medical profession will be aware of the wider possibilities for care now available to handicapped children and of the need for families to come forward. Adoption is no longer merely a service linking healthy infants with childless couples, but more and more a service to plan the future of any child deprived of the care of his own family.

ANNE M. JEPSON
Medical Adviser
PHILLIDA SAWBRIDGE
Director

Parents for Children
222 Camden High Street
London NW1.

COLLEGE SUBSCRIPTIONS

Sir,
Last year I paid the £10 allowed to doctors who have been registered for under five years, but this year comes the £35 crunch! I have not worked since last summer and am not likely to do so for some time yet, as I have recently had a baby.

Is there any chance of concessionary rates being extended for non-practising members?

PATRICIA SANTER

Sunnyhurst
Worleston Road
Reaseheath
Nantwich
Cheshire.

This letter has been shown to the Honorary Treasurer of the College, who replies below—Ed.

Sir,
It is clear there may be a number of young practitioners like Dr Santer who, for very good reasons, have temporarily retired from general practice. They will be pleased to know that the Finance Committee has considered their situation and has authorized me to tell Dr Santer, and anybody who makes such a request, that they will be allowed to continue to pay the same annual subscription, as though they were still registered less than five years, as long as they are not in any form of practice. We will be asking them to submit a declaration to this effect each year when the subscription is due.

The by-laws of the College make clear that those who have given up general practice but are in some other form of

medical work are not eligible for this concession.

STUART CARNE
Honorary Treasurer

14 Princes Gate
London SW7 1PU.

DOCTORS' DESPAIR

Sir,
I was interested in the article by Drs Bourne and Lewis (January *Journal*, p. 37-39). However, they state: "the diseases we appear to generate from inside ourselves are almost untouched by our advances". I can sympathize with their comment on poor medicine but wish to point out that as family doctors our goals are to attempt to help our patients to be as healthy as possible so that they can enjoy and live their lives as well as possible.

I believe much more is done to help people live with chronic illness than Drs Bourne and Lewis recognize. Because we alone have long-term continuity of medical care, what is achieved with chronic handicap may not always be appreciated by doctors in other branches of medicine.

Thus, as a family doctor, I do not feel "clinically ineffective" but increasingly clinically effective as I help patients help themselves with these problems.

Similarly, I cannot agree that "making a diagnosis" is the be-all and end-all of medicine. When people come to see me they are not really concerned with what is wrong with them, they just want to get better. If I am unable to help the patient get better, it is my job to explain why this is so and help him to function as best he can.

I believe that general practitioners are ahead of many hospital doctors in understanding the topic to which they refer.

JAMES A. COLLYER

310 Piccadilly Street
London
Ontario
Canada.

COLLEGE CREST

Sir,
Fortunately, heraldic creatures are not restrained by zoological classification or anatomical description, but only by their blazon and the imagination of the artist depicting them. C. R. Humphery-Smith states in *Heraldry* that "A lion rampant gules can be fat or thin, hairy or bald, happy or angry, calm or aggressive, but it must be a lion and it must ramp; the red can be vermillion or deep carmine—though there is some taste in this matter—but it must be red."

I would like to congratulate the artist responsible for the version of the College arms reproduced on your stationery. The owl's avuncular appearance exudes wisdom, wit, and benevolence. Furthermore, I would speculate that the relationship between the owl and the serpent is most idyllic, reminiscent of Eden during the pre-apple era.

D. W. RAE

600 Queen Avenue
Portage La Prairie
Manitoba R1N 0W6
Canada.

NEW FORMAT OF THE JOURNAL

Sir,
The college *Journal* used to be well worthy of binding and keeping for reference. It is less so now and it is sad to see deterioration nearing throw-away level when the editorial content is so good.

Advertising is handled badly. When the College published the *Journal* itself it was planned so that all advertising matter could be removed before the remainder was bound. In my bound copies of Volumes 7 and 8 (1964) there is no advertising whatsoever; in Volumes 14 and 15 (1968) there are three pages, all on the backs of title pages not normally retained in bound copies and clearly included by mistake at the bindery.

Deterioration began when outside publishers were employed. By 1976 there were 112 pages of advertising of which 60 were on the back of editorial matter and therefore could not be extracted and had to be bound.

This year there has been a further massive deterioration. If the style of the first four months is retained there will be 216 pages of advertising of which only 93 can be extracted and the remaining 123 must inevitably be included in a bound copy. Your second editorial in March cannot be bound without advertisements of the Royal Navy and an antibiotic; the same applies to the April editorial with a full-page advertisement of a purgative. A paper by Moore and Garraway in April included a full-page colour picture of a London bus, and the same picture was even more firmly attached to Briscoe's paper in January. If this goes on, that bus will occupy six pages of every bound copy of the 1977 *Journal*.

This is a ridiculous arrangement. Members paying an annual subscription of £35 ought to be provided with a *Journal* worthy of the College's status and of the efforts of those who contri-