

Research awards for trainees

THE Royal College of General Practitioners is pleased to announce the introduction of three new prizes for reports of research in general practice carried out by vocational trainees during their trainee year.

These RCGP/Astra Research Awards will consist of a first prize of £500, a second prize of £250, and a third prize of £100, and will be awarded at the discretion of an adjudicating panel organized by the Scientific Foundation of the College.

For some time in various parts of the country, special prizes have been available to trainees, usually limited to certain regions or schemes.

These new awards will be open to all trainees in the

British Isles, and flexible terms of reference will allow candidates to have financial support, provided this is disclosed. Multiauthor projects involving several trainees will also qualify.

The College has always supported the idea of research in general practice and it is a natural extension of its policy to promote research by vocational trainees. This *Journal* has already published several articles written solely or jointly by vocational trainees, and the number is steadily increasing.

We welcome this new development and acknowledge the support of Astra in financing these awards. We hope that many trainees will now apply.

Number 15 Princes Gate

THE membership of the College and the complexity of its business are growing all the time. With members both in this country and throughout the rest of the world, the need for a central headquarters is vital. Not only was the College fortunate in acquiring 14 Princes Gate at a time when that need first became apparent, but it proved also to be an extremely shrewd move—the value of the property has more than trebled during the College's 14 years of ownership.

Apart from its attractive style, which is a great source of pleasure to college members, the advantages of number 14 lie in its central position and the fact that it is able to offer its members residential accommodation. This has proved a great boon to members and associates living outside London. One of the great attractions of being able to stay overnight for those attending meetings is that it enables them to indulge in long, informal discussions, often stretching far into the night, as extensions of the formal business of the day; and those who are not often able to meet are able to debate and exchange ideas freely in relaxed surroundings. A further benefit is that the cost of this accommodation is still, as it has always been, well below the commercial cost of accommodation elsewhere in London.

Nevertheless, despite its success in this direction, number 14 has considerable limitations. Its lack of committee rooms and the relatively cramped library quarters leave much to be desired; it is remarkable that

a college which has achieved so much has managed with only a council room and one additional committee room. Furthermore, the building is now used by well over 7,000 people, nearly 2,000 more than when it was first bought, and the numbers are continuing to rise. Clearly there is an urgent need for additional accommodation if the work of the College is to be contained in one central building.

In 1975 the College was approached by the owner of number 15 Princes Gate and invited to make an offer for the house. The price then asked was about £3m, which was well beyond the means of the College. In 1976, however, discussions were reopened, and thanks particularly to the Honorary Treasurer, Dr Stuart Carne, a more acceptable price was negotiated. The College had received professional advice that investment in good property was likely to be a better hedge against inflation in the years ahead than holding stocks and shares, and Council therefore decided, virtually unanimously, to approve the purchase of number 15, using money from the Appeal Fund rather than members' subscriptions. The terms were particularly attractive to the College, as they provided for a down payment of less than half of the total price (£323,000), with the balance paid by 12 annual instalments of £15,000 each.

The title deeds are dated 31 December 1976 and confirm the purchase of a 950-year lease on those parts

of number 15 not occupied by the previous owner and his family, with ten car ports and some fixtures and fittings. After 12 years, or a shorter period in the event of the owner not continuing to live there, the whole house becomes the property of the College on a 950-year lease from an insurance company, with the additional option of purchasing the freehold.

Thus in its jubilee year the College has been able to secure for the second time in Princes Gate investment in

property which should stand its members in good stead. The officers are now working hard to prepare the new building for occupation and negotiating planning permission for making the necessary alterations. In this way a move from Princes Gate, which would have been inevitable—a move which would have been greatly regretted, especially by older members—has been avoided. The headquarters of the College has been firmly re-established for the rest of the century.

14 and 15 Princes Gate.

