

The centre will be open on weekday afternoons between 14.00 and 16.30 hours and will be staffed by a receptionist and a nurse, and a doctor will attend on two or three afternoons a week.

The project will be evaluated by the Department of Community Medicine at the Middlesex Hospital Medical School in conjunction with Birkbeck College, University of London.

### JOINT COMMITTEE ON POSTGRADUATE TRAINING FOR GENERAL PRACTICE

The Joint Committee on Postgraduate Training for General Practice and the Royal College of General Practitioners have approved the following vocational training schemes: Grimsby, Glasgow Northern District, East Glamorgan, Oxford Scheme 3, and West Wales General Hospital.

The following vocational training schemes have been reapproved: Burton-on-Trent, Frimley Park Hospital, and Medway.

These schemes are recognized by the Royal College of General Practitioners

for the purpose of the MRCGP examination.

### NHS EXPENDITURE

The total expenditure on the NHS as a percentage of the gross national product in the following years was as follows:

1964	3.93
1965	4.17
1966	4.33
1967	4.50
1968	4.54
1969	4.52
1970	4.84
1971	4.91
1972	5.00
1973	4.91
1974	5.16

### Reference

Central Statistical Office (1975). *Annual Abstract of Statistics*. No. 112. London: HMSO.

### JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF MEDICINE

With effect from January 1978 the *Proceedings of the Royal Society of*

*Medicine* will appear under the new title of *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*.

This *Journal* was founded in 1907 and will continue to be published monthly.

### THE BEGINNINGS OF LIFE

The Winnicott Memorial Fund of the British Psychoanalytical Society is arranging a day conference in association with the Royal College of Midwives on "The Beginnings of Life" on Friday, 21 April. Further details can be obtained from: Mrs Joyce Coles, 120 Corringway, London W5 3HA.

### MARIE CURIE MEMORIAL FOUNDATION SYMPOSIUM

The Marie Curie Memorial Foundation's tenth annual symposium, "Cancer—Solutions within our Grasp", will be held on Tuesday, 16 May 1978 in the Edward Lumley Hall at the Royal College of Surgeons of England. Enquiries should be addressed to: The Secretary, 124 Sloane Street, London SW1X 9BP.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### Editorial note

*The Editor welcomes the increasing number of letters being submitted for publication. The pressure on space is, however, becoming intense and in recent months several lengthy letters have been received. Correspondents are asked to be brief and letters of more than 400 words are unlikely to be accepted in future.*

### RAISED BLOOD PRESSURE AND PSORIASIS

Sir,

I read with interest the clinical study in general practice reported by Dr Preece (December *Journal*, p. 713) in which there appeared to be an association between psoriasis and hypertension in male patients.

When such associations are demonstrated it is important to consider the possible causes. One that immediately springs to mind is therapy. This can work in both directions. For instance, psoriasiform lesions have been described with nearly all the commonly

used beta-adrenergic receptor blockers, which are most often given in the management of hypertension. These lesions are histologically unlike true psoriasis but the superficial appearances are similar.

On the other hand, psoriasis is often treated with liberal applications of a variety of corticosteroid creams and ointments. The danger here is the absorption of systemically significant amounts of corticosteroids which can increase salt and water retention and perhaps lead to a higher incidence of hypertension.

It would be interesting to know whether Dr Preece has any data which might throw light on these possibilities.

D. M. BURLEY

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### THE PILL

Sir,

The Jubilee editorial (November *Journal*, p.644) comments on a recent

paper from the Manchester Research Unit (1977) which describes the increased risks run by contraceptive pill-takers over the age of 35. While fully accepting the need to modify my advice to patients, I wonder if colleagues might be surprised, as I was, at the numbers likely to be affected by this change of policy.

Last July a 1:10 random sample of married women in my practice, between 37 and 51 years, was drawn and a postal questionnaire sent out. Ninety-four out of 97 women replied and of these ten (10.6 per cent) were currently taking an oral contraceptive. Thus, in a practice of 9,000 patients, probably 100 women between 37 years and the menopause were still on the Pill, and 30 of these were also smokers.

Though I practise in a new town, the percentage of women in this age group is very similar to that for Scotland as a whole.

The RCGP Report was also widely publicized in the daily press and in this practice we have noted a marked increase in requests and referrals for sterilization and a modest revival of the dutch cap. For the whole sample the mean age at delivery of last child was 31.0 years and a substantial number of women have continued an increasingly