
COLLEGE NEWS

COLLEGE ACCOMMODATION

College accommodation this year will be closed between 11 August and 4 September, while the housekeeper is on holiday.

PRACTICE ORGANIZATION ROOM

The Practice Organization Study has been reorganized to provide two components. The first comprises a register of innovations in general practice which identifies practices that have a new approach to buildings or have new buildings, new methods of using staff or modifications on old methods, and innovations in filing and screening systems. The information comes from college faculties and individual general practitioners who fill in a questionnaire obtained from the College. A second, more detailed, questionnaire is also available whose purpose is to show the internal running of a practice in all its aspects. This contains much interesting information but because it is tedious to record it is being used to a much lesser degree. The current exhibition shows examples of both types of questionnaire and how they are used, and also shows examples of the kind of information we are endeavouring to achieve.

The exhibit will subsequently be available for loan to faculties as are all the other exhibits in the College. Arrangements may be made for loan with Mrs J. Mant, Secretary to the Practice Organization Committee, at 14 Princes Gate, London SW7 1PU.

It is of great importance that the College records current methods of organization in general practice, including management of staff and the handling of equipment, since advance in

the discipline can be achieved only by a mutual learning process. It is for this reason that the Practice Organization Study needs to succeed, and we would be delighted to receive completed questionnaires from any general practitioner in order to achieve this aim. It does not matter if the innovation is slight—all information is useful to this study.

The Practice Organization Room also contains demonstration tapes and slides from the Graves Medical Audiovisual Library, a number of monographs on different aspects of practice organization, and various other exhibits.

ASTRA RESEARCH AWARDS

The Astra Pharmaceutical Company has generously offered up to three annual prizes to stimulate research in general practice, particularly that which is undertaken during vocational training in general practice. These will consist of an annual first prize of £500, a second prize of £250, and a third prize of £100.

Entrance is limited to general practitioners who have undergone vocational training. To be eligible a project must be initiated during the vocational training period and a certificate to this effect will be required from the trainer.

Initially an application form and a protocol of the project must be lodged with the Secretary of the Scientific Foundation Board, Royal College of General Practitioners, 14 Princes Gate, London SW7 1PU.

The project must be completed and a report submitted within two years of completing the vocational training

period. Multiauthor projects between several trainees will also qualify. It is not necessary for the applicant to be an associate or member of the College.

The closing date for receipt of final reports for adjudication will be 25 September 1978.

FUTURE COURSES

September 1978

17-22 A Course in General Practice for Doctors Trained Overseas Part 2.

MRCGP EXAMINATIONS

The dates for the next MRCGP examinations are as follows:

November/December 1978

Written papers: Thursday, 2 November 1978.

Orals: In Edinburgh and London during the week ending 16 December 1978.

Closing date: 21 September 1978.

May/July 1979

Written papers: Thursday, 17 May 1979.

Orals: In Edinburgh during the week ending 30 June 1979 and in London during the week ending 7 July 1979.

Closing date: 5 April 1979.

The written papers will be held in London, Birmingham, Leeds, Newcastle, Manchester, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Cardiff, Belfast, and Dublin. These and other centres may be used as required, subject to a minimum (and in some centres a maximum) number of candidates. It may be necessary to limit the total numbers and candidates are therefore advised to apply well in advance of the closing dates.

The application fee is £50 and the reapplication fee £25.

MEDICAL NEWS

ROYAL COLLEGE OF PSYCHIATRISTS

Professor Desmond Pond, FRC.PSYCH, Professor of Psychiatry at the London Hospital Medical College has been elected President Elect of the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

In January 1978 the Council of the University of Manchester conferred the title 'Emeritus' on Professor P. S. Byrne, CBE, M.Sc, FRCGP, with effect from his retirement on 30 June 1978.

PRESCRIPTION PRICING AUTHORITY

The NHS Prescription Pricing Authority has been reconstituted with effect from 1 April 1978, broadly on the lines recommended in the Tricker Report.

The Chairman is Mr G. M. Dinsley (Chief Executive, Co-operative Laundries Society Limited) and among the members are Dr G. E. Crawford, FRCGP, General Practitioner, Liverpool, Dr Mervyn Goodman, FRCGP, General Practitioner, Liverpool, and Dr R. J. R. Lewis, MB BS, General Practitioner, Taunton.

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Dr J. C. Murdoch, MRCGP, General Practitioner, Dundee, and Senior Lecturer in the Department of General Practice at the University of Dundee, has been awarded the degree of MD from the University of Glasgow for his thesis "A study of possible factors involved in the early mortality of adults with Down's syndrome".

HARRY MAJOLIS LECTURER 1978

Dr C. A. H. Watts, OBE, FRCGP, MRC.PSYCH, has been appointed Harry Majolis Lecturer for 1978.

He will give a series of talks in various centres in Rhodesia and will also speak in Johannesburg and Cape Town.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE CHILD UNDER STRESS

The International Conference on the Child under Stress will be held from 15 to 21 October 1978 in Monte Carlo and is sponsored by the British Association of Social Psychiatry. Further information may be obtained from the Secretariat, CUS Conference, 100 Park Road, London NW1 4RN.

SINGLE-HANDED PRACTITIONERS

In the four Thames regions, out of a total of 6,402 principals, there were 1,468 (22 per cent) practising single-handed. The figure for the North-Western region was 20 per cent, and for the Mersey and West Midlands regions, both 17 per cent. The smallest percentages of single-handed practitioners were in the Oxford region (seven per cent) and the East Anglian region (eight per cent).

EXTRAMARITAL CONCEPTIONS

Mr David Ennals, Secretary of State for Social Services, has reported that during the period 1972 to 1976 there had been a 24 per cent drop in the rate of extramarital conceptions per 1,000 women in the 16 to 19 year age group, from 60.4 per 1,000 single women in 1972 to

45.8 per 1,000 single women in 1976, a fall of 24 per cent. A similar decline occurred in the 20 to 24 year age group.

Even in the under-16 age group, where the numbers are small but of considerable concern, the figures which showed a rise of up to 2.0 per 1,000 women in 1973 remained steady after that and dropped to 1.8 per 1,000 in 1976. Nevertheless, there were 27,104 abortions notified and 19,800 illegitimate live births recorded to young women under the age of 20 in England and Wales in 1976.

INCREASES IN CHILD BENEFIT AND PENSIONS

Child benefit, now £2.30 a week per child, rises to £3 a week in November 1978 and £4 a week in April 1979.

The basic retirement pension, now £17.50 a week for single people and £28 for married couples, goes up to £19.50 and £31.20 in November 1978.

DENMARK

The first Danish Research Unit of General Practice was established on 1 May 1978 with Dr Paul A. Pedersen, General Practitioner, as Director.

Dr Clifford R. Kay visited Denmark in 1978 to give advice about collective general-practitioner studies and he also spoke about the Oral Contraception Study.

NORDIC CONGRESS OF GENERAL PRACTICE

The first Nordic Congress of General Practice will be held in Copenhagen from 6 to 9 June 1979. The Chairman will be Professor Paul Backer of Denmark and further information can be obtained from Dr Ole Møller Olsen, Postbox 20, DK-4130 Viby Sj., Denmark.

MEDICAL EXPORTS

Mr David Ennals, Secretary of State for Social Services, has estimated that medical exports will exceed £1,000m in 1978 which is a "significant contribution" to the balance of payments.

GEIGY TRAVELLING FELLOWSHIPS FOR GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

Geigy Pharmaceuticals are offering travelling fellowships for general practitioners with an interest in cardiology for a World Congress on Cardiology to be held from 17 to 23 September 1978.

CONTRACEPTIVE SERVICES

Of 23,225 general practitioners in England and Wales, 20,591 were providing a contraceptive service to 2.35 million women at July 1976. About 5,000 general practitioners fit intrauterine devices.

Reference

Family Planning Today (1978). First quarter, p. 1.

OMBUDSMAN

The Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (the Ombudsman) in his third report for the session 1977/78 reports that among the government departments concerned the one attracting the greatest number of complaints was the Department of Health and Social Services.

ORANGE BADGE SCHEME

Mr Alfred Morris, MP, Minister for the Disabled, announced that he had asked local authorities to introduce a new standardized form incorporating a medical certificate for use by general practitioners when recommending the issue of an Orange Badge. He regards this as a major step against abuse and hopes that it will ensure that badges are issued only to people who completely satisfy medical criteria.

KIDNEYS AVAILABLE FOR TRANSPLANT

The Government is launching a publicity drive to double the number of kidneys available for kidney transplants. The campaign, which will cost over £100,000, will urge the general public through television, posters, and other publicity to carry a kidney donor card which will indicate their willingness for their kidneys to be used after death for transplantation.

Another prong of the campaign will encourage doctors to co-operate with transplant surgeons by identifying suitable donors and setting in motion the processes for organ removal.

Mr David Ennals, Secretary of State for Social Services, announced that the number of women who have become mothers after having a kidney transplant was increasing each year and last year there were 706 using cadaver kidneys.

However, at the end of January 1978 there were still 1,123 patients awaiting kidney transplantation.

SHEFFIELD'S HEALTH SERVICE

The Secretary of State for Social Services has approved the proposal of the Sheffield Area Health Authority

(Teaching) to change its management arrangements so that it will in future have two rather than three health districts.

NEW PENSION SCHEME

The new national pension scheme started in April 1978. The aim is to provide two pensions for every employed person: a basic pension replacing the present flat rate pension and a second pension related to each person's earnings. All the benefits will be fully protected against inflation.

Women will have equality with men and will pay the same contributions for the same benefits. People who have to stay at home to bring up a family will have pension rights protected.

It has been estimated that it will take 20 years for the new scheme to build up and by then a married man on average earnings will be able to retire on more than half his pay.

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 reapproved the vocational training schemes at South Birmingham, Norwich, Great Yarmouth, Queen Elizabeth II, Welwyn, and Luton and Dunstable. These schemes are recognized by the Royal College of General Practitioners for the purpose of the MRCGP examination.

HEALTH EDUCATION OFFICERS

Area health education officers employed by area health authorities in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland have recently formed a new Association of Area Health Education Officers.

Their aims will be to discuss and exchange views on health education and to promote professionalism and the interests of health education.

Further information can be obtained from Miss J. M. Waghorn, Secretary, Surrey Area Health Authority, Health Education Department, Friary Court, 13-21 High Street, Guildford, Surrey.

NURSES IN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

Mr Bill Simpson, Chairman of the Health and Safety Commission, has recently stated that a significant proportion of occupational health services in industry have specially trained occupational health nurses in sole charge. He believes: "It is very likely that as this training develops, nurses will be taking

over many duties and responsibilities which in the past have been carried out by doctors".

GRAVES MEDICAL AUDIOVISUAL LIBRARY

The Graves Medical Audiovisual Library reports an increase to 27,654 tape-slides lent during 1977. About 6,000 tapes went overseas, especially to medical schools.

One hundred and thirteen new tape-slide programmes were recorded during 1977 and about half of these were made in co-operation with other organizations.

The Annual Report for 1977 of the Library, which was formerly called the Medical Recording Service Foundation, states that the new charity started work on 25 October 1977. The Chairman is Sir George Godber, GCB, FRCP, FRCGP.

The Annual Report and further information is available from PO Box 99, Chelmsford CM1 5 HL.

Assistant Medical Director

Mr Peter Leatherdale, formerly Nurse Tutor at the Colchester District School of Nursing, has been appointed Assistant Medical Director to the Graves Medical Audiovisual Library, Chelmsford.

HEARING THERAPISTS

Mr Alfred Morris, Minister for the Disabled, has announced plans to create a new kind of specialist—a 'hearing therapist'—in the NHS. The aim will be to help adult people improve their communication skills and to co-ordinate other means of help required in their rehabilitation.

COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCIL REPRESENTATION ON FAMILY PRACTITIONER COMMITTEES

The Association of Community Health Councils for England and Wales reports that 36 family practitioner committees offer observer status with speaking rights to local community health councils in their area and a further nine offer observer status without speaking rights.

PHARMACY ASSISTANT "FAIRLY DISMISSED"

An industrial tribunal has held that a female pharmacy assistant who took a 'cry-for-help' overdose of drugs prop-

erly obtained on prescription was fairly dismissed from her employment as a result of taking that overdose.

The tribunal unanimously held that the reason for the dismissal related to "capability" which included "health or any other physical or mental quality". It also held (but only by a two to one majority) that the employers had acted reasonably in treating that reason as a sufficient reason for dismissing the assistant.

Reference

Pharmaceutical Journal (1978). 220, 247.

HIGHER CHARGES FOR PRIVATE PATIENTS IN THE NHS

The Secretary of State for Social Services, Mr David Ennals, has announced increased charges for private patients in NHS hospitals.

For a pay bed in acute hospitals, where most beds are located, the daily charge is increased by about 8½ per cent.

The Health Ministers have also reviewed charges for services to private outpatients at NHS hospitals.

Examples of typical costs from 1 April 1978 are as follows: pathology request, £2.40; chest x-ray, £6.40; physiotherapy (single treatment), £1.60; use of operating theatre facilities, £17.50.

EQUIPMENT FOR THE DISABLED

Wheelchairs

Wheelchairs, the new booklet in the series "Equipment for the Disabled" is now available. Its two sections contain details both of commercially available wheelchairs and wheelchairs supplied in the UK by the Department of Health and Social Security.

Wheelchairs is available, price £1.50 (postage and packing extra), from 2 Foredown Drive, Portslade, Sussex.

Outdoor Transport

Another booklet, *Outdoor Transport*, contains details of interest to disabled motorists and those with limited mobility and can be obtained, price £1.50 (postage and packing extra), from the above address.

POPULATION IN ENGLAND AND WALES

The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys reports that in 1977 deaths exceeded births for the second successive year.

In addition there was a 17,000 net loss through migration with the result that

there was a third successive annual decrease in the population—the largest so far.

The mid-1977 population in England and Wales was 49,119,000. In England and Wales the fertility rate fell from 1.72 children a family in 1976 to 1.66 in 1977.

The 1977 provisional figures for live births represent the thirteenth year of a continual decline in the birth rate.

The consequences of a progressively falling birth rate have been a decline of five per cent between 1976 and 1977 in the number of children in the 0 to 4 age group and a decline of 75,000 (two per cent) in the 5 to 9 age group. Simultaneously, however, the number of people aged 65 and over increased by 90,000 (one per cent).

SCOTLAND

Births

In 1977 the number of births in Scotland and the birth rate were both the lowest recorded since comprehensive records began in 1855.

The number of births registered were 62,244, equivalent to a birth rate of 11.98 per thousand of the population.

Illegitimate births accounted for 9.6 per cent of all live births, this rate being the highest since 1870.

The expectation of life at birth, calculated on 1977 data, was 68.2 years for males and 74.6 years for females.

Deaths

The death rate was 11.96 per thousand of the population compared with 12.54 in 1976.

The infant mortality rate was 16.1 per thousand live births compared with 14.8 in 1976.

Population

The home population of Scotland was estimated to be 5,195,600 at 30 June 1977.

HOSPITAL WAITING LISTS

The number of patients waiting on inpatient waiting lists at hospitals for all specialties in England at the end of 1977 was higher, at 607,000, than at any year since 1970.

TRAINING PHARMACIST TRAINERS

A call for training courses for pharmacists who supervise pre-registration experience was made by speakers at a conference on "The Pre-registration Year" organized by the Chiltern region of the Pharmaceutical Society on 4 March 1978.

There was general agreement by the meeting that the Society's requirements

for pre-registration experience were inadequate, and that there should be a "more structured" year, with an oral assessment at or near the end.

Reference

Pharmaceutical Journal, (1978). **220**, 220-222.

HOME CONFINEMENTS

Of all births that took place in Britain during 1976, 2.6 per cent were at home.

NOTICE TO TRAVELLERS—HEALTH PROTECTION

The Department of Health and Social Security has now published a new version of the booklet giving advice on health to travellers and holidaymakers going abroad. It gives guidance on personal protection against various diseases, international vaccination requirements, how and where to get vaccinated, and how long International Certificates of Vaccination are valid.

Copies of this booklet are available free of charge to all general practitioners direct from the Department of Health and Social Security, Alexander Fleming House, Elephant and Castle, London SE1 6BY.

GENERAL PRACTITIONERS IN THE UK

During 1976 the total number of general practitioners in the UK who had been born in Great Britain increased by 60 and that of general practitioners who had been born overseas, by 181.

The total number of woman doctors increased by 156, of whom 55 were born outside the UK and the Irish Republic.

Reference

Department of Health and Social Security (1977). *On the State of the Public Health*. London: HMSO.

EXPENDITURE ON HEALTH SERVICES

The capital and revenue costs per head of population of the health services, including family practitioner services, in regional health authority areas in England in 1976/77 were respectively as follows:

	Capital (£)	Revenue (£)
South-East Thames	6.58	112.39
North-West Thames	5.38	112.35
North-East Thames	6.49	111.94
South-West Thames	8.59	104.75
Mersey	9.56	97.85
South Western	6.91	97.28
North Western	6.55	94.20
Yorkshire	6.36	91.78

Northern	8.02	91.39
Oxford	6.98	88.27
Wessex	6.74	87.95
East Anglia	7.12	87.56
West Midlands	5.44	86.70
Trent	10.00	83.44

Reference

Family Practitioner Services (1978). **5**, 39.

VALIDITY OF CARBON COPIES OF NHS PRESCRIPTIONS

It was the custom before 1 February 1978 for some practitioners to issue carbon copy prescriptions for NHS patients on long-term therapy. Each prescription was, however, individually signed by the prescriber. The Medicines (Prescriptions Only) Order 1977 provides that from 1 February 1978 prescriptions "shall be written in indelible ink" and inquiries have been made about the validity of NHS prescriptions which are carbon copies.

Whether or not a prescription is written in indelible ink depends on the facts of the particular case, but the general question has been referred by the Pharmaceutical Society to the Department of Health and Social Security. Pending an official reply, pharmacists are advised to continue accepting carbon copy NHS prescriptions which have been individually signed by the prescribers.

Reference

Pharmaceutical Journal (1978). **220**, 170.

TEACHING HOSPITALS

Individual doctors in London teaching hospitals attend 145 patients every year compared with 222 seen by doctors in provincial non-teaching hospitals.

Reference

The Times (1978). 18 February.

PHARMACY PREMISES TO BE STRUCK OFF

A South London pharmacy at which medicines were dispensed during a week when there was no pharmacist in charge is to be struck from the Register of Premises for a period of one year, the Statutory Committee decided at a meeting earlier this year. The Committee adjourned for one year its decision in the case of the company's superintendent pharmacist. The Chairman, Sir Gordon Willmer, presided.

Reference

The Pharmaceutical Journal (1978). **220**, 196-199.