

Annual Spring Meeting

THE 1978 Annual Spring Meeting of the College was held at West Midlands College, Walsall, and was arranged by the Midland Faculty of the College. The theme of the meeting was "Education and Research".

Friday, 14 April 1978

The Birmingham Research Unit of the Royal College of General Practitioners presented an afternoon session on the work of the Unit. Dr Donald Crombie took the chair and the lecture theatre was full to overflowing.

Dr Peter Clark

Dr Peter Clark, a general practitioner from Ross-on-Wye and part-time member of the staff of the Birmingham Research Unit, described the system of weekly returns with particular reference to infectious disease. He showed that through the network of recording practices the likelihood of an influenza epidemic could be predicted earlier than by any other method.

Dr Douglas Fleming

Dr Douglas Fleming, a general practitioner from Birmingham and part-time member of the Research Unit, described in detail a system of selective recording, using a summary card which the Unit had produced. He emphasized the relevance of this method of recording to teaching.

Dr L. A. Pike

Dr L. A. Pike, a general practitioner from Birmingham, ended the session by describing the Birmingham Diabetic Survey which was carried out some years ago into the prevalence of glycosuria in a large cross-section of the population of that area. There has been a careful follow-up and much important information about the early stages, particularly the pre-symptomatic stages, of diabetes has been gathered.

Presentation to Dr R. J. F. H. Pinsent

At the end of the afternoon Dr R. J. F. H. Pinsent, who retired from general practice and the Research Unit at the end of November 1977, was presented with an illuminated address and some silver as an expression of gratitude from the staff of the Unit and those people throughout the country who had used the resources of the Unit over the years that Dr Pinsent had been associated with it.

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Reception

In the evening the Mayor of Walsall gave a sherry reception in the College and this was followed by an informal supper where all those attending were able to meet in a relaxed atmosphere—so relaxed that even a senior DHSS colleague was observed tinkling the ivory keys!

Saturday, 15 April 1978

The President of the College, Dr E. V. Kuenssberg, welcomed those attending and said how pleased he was to be able to introduce the Chairman of the first session on general-practitioner research, Sir Richard Doll. Sir Richard had had a most distinguished academic record and had advised on many occasions about general-practitioner research.

Sir Richard Doll—Chairman

Sir Richard Doll spoke of the opportunities for research in general practice and noted that a moderate improvement in the management of common diseases was of more benefit to the public than major improvements in the management of rare diseases.

Dr A. Ross (Stoke-on-Trent)

Dr A. Ross presented a report on pneumoconiosis in general practice. He defined this and then described how he and his colleagues had obtained a research grant in order to identify the characteristics of those patients with this condition and compare and contrast them with matched controls from their own practices.

Dr Peter Clark (Hereford)

Dr Peter Clark spoke from the Birmingham Research Unit of the College about attitudes and prescribing. He was sure that it was most unlikely that prescribing policies would change as a result of external pressure and felt that it was of utmost importance that individual prescribers should have opportunities to learn from each other. He emphasized the remarkably wide range in prescribing behaviour among general practitioners and illustrated this in detail.

Dr S. Dillon (Rugeley)

Dr S. Dillon spoke of an epidemiological survey he had carried out in a big group practice of about 30,000 patients, when he had recorded significant abnormalities in children born in the practice and had charted the different kinds of abnormality in relation to climatic

variables. By plotting the occurrence of these on a map of his practice area he was able to show a significant increase in the occurrence of such abnormalities in the neighbourhood of a big power station.

Dr Michael Drury (Bromsgrove)

Dr Michael Drury, Provost of the Midland Faculty, reported a study he had carried out on reports of adverse reactions to drugs.

He outlined the broad principles about how such information could be gathered and underlined the importance of obtaining accurate information from general practice. He quoted from the Second National Morbidity Survey doctors who had reported three times the number of adverse reactions to drugs compared with general practitioners notifying adverse reactions on the yellow cards, but concluded that more detailed studies of specific reports of adverse reactions in general practice could be obtained by detailed surveillance. He described a system whereby a strip was attached to the back of prescriptions which represented a tracer or marker whereby particular drugs could be selectively followed up. He was sure that the needs of society, patients, and doctors all led to a more precise method of identifying adverse reactions being required.

Dr F. M. Hull (Wellesbourne)

Dr F. M. Hull, Part-time Lecturer at the Department of General Practice, University of Birmingham, presented a study on vaginal discharge in general practice. He had asked a group of general practitioners to define the questions and examinations which they would normally carry out in general practice and subsequently asked the same doctors to report on a series of consultations with patients with this condition on what they had actually done. By comparing the two he found that there was always a gap between what the doctors had intended and what they had actually done. Nor was it clear whether what was intended was necessarily desirable and his report illustrated considerable differences of opinion among general practitioners about what were the most important questions to ask. He argued that this method represented a different approach to medical audit and could be a useful starting point for a variety of symptoms.

Group discussions

After the formal presentations by these five general practitioners, all working within the boundaries of the Midland Faculty, the meeting moved into groups and a series of more detailed demonstrations were held on each of these topics.

Dr Michael Drury was supported by Professor Owen Wade, of the Department of Therapeutics at the University of Birmingham, and Dr Inman, of the Committee on Safety of Drugs. Dr F. M. Hull was supported by Professor Curzon, of the Department of Obstetrics at St Mary's Medical School, and also by Dr

John Wright, a Senior Lecturer in General Practice at the University of Leeds.

Afternoon session

In the afternoon the chair was taken by Dr V. W. M. Drury, Provost of the Midland Faculty.

Professor Owen Wade

Professor Owen Wade, Department of Therapeutics, University of Birmingham, spoke on teaching methods used in his Department. He emphasized the importance of participation by learners and quoted from the Bible the educational model of "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest". He compared learning with the skill of children learning to ride a bicycle and concluded by demonstrating some of his own teaching in a seminar at the University of Birmingham with a group of medical students.

Professor J. Malins

Professor J. Malins, Postgraduate Dean at the University of Birmingham Medical School, spoke about diabetes. He demonstrated a consultation with a new diabetic patient in hospital and subsequently Dr G. Thorpe illustrated a consultation with a pair of patients, also with diabetes, and discussed some of the complications of the disease.

Professor R. Hoffenberg

Professor R. Hoffenberg, Professor of Medicine at the University of Birmingham, spoke about the problem of continuing education. He referred to many of the treatments which he had been required to recall for both his final and MRCP examinations and showed that virtually all of them were quite out of date now. He analysed the ways in which consultants kept up to date and suggested that these could be classified as meeting colleagues, including intensive peer group discussions with colleagues whom one respected; group meetings, including journal clubs; and what could be described as a process of osmosis by working in a stimulating atmosphere created by research seminars, national and international meetings, and particularly reading. He himself found refereeing papers a great help and thought that the process of teaching forced the teacher to organize his thoughts in a systematic way. Finally, of course, the traditional ways of learning were to write and carry out research.

After these presentations the meeting again divided into groups where the topics introduced by the speakers were discussed in greater depth.

Dr E. V. Kuenssberg

Dr E. V. Kuenssberg, President of the College, ended the symposium by summing up the main contributions made by the speakers throughout the day and expressing the thanks of the College to Dr Drury and the Midland Faculty for such a stimulating and interesting day.

Faculty Dinner

The Annual Faculty Dinner of the Midland Faculty of the College was held in the Council Chamber at Birmingham, by kind permission of the Birmingham City Council. The Provost of the Midland Faculty, Dr V. W. M. Drury, presided, and the principal speakers were Mrs Freda M. Cocks, OBE, JP, the Lord Mayor of Birmingham, the Rt Rev. A. S. Reeve, DD, D.LIT MA, who proposed the toast of the College, and Dr E. V. Kuenssberg, CBE, President of the College, who replied on behalf of the guests.

Sunday, 16 April 1978

Business meeting

At the business meeting Dr V. W. M. Drury presented the nomination for election to honorary fellow of Professor Sir Richard Doll, FRS, FRCP. Professor Doll was elected with acclamation and received a standing ovation.

New fellows

The following members were elected to fellowship:

Ahern, M.	Horn, R.
Anderson, P. M. D.	Inch, D. D.
Anderson, W. V.	Kennedy, G. L.
Ball, J. G.	Laurence, A. R.
Barr, H. C.	Lester, J. P.
Bisset, H. W.	McElderry, R. K.
Bull, M. J. V.	MacNeill, R. M.
Carne, H. J.	Mercer, J. C. G.
Carr, F. N.	Morgan, J. E.
Charlewood, J. E.	Morton, D. J.
Cheetham, J. W.	Moss, S. D.
Clegg, D. F. G.	Mukherji, P. S.
Cormack, J. J. C.	Norris, J. P.
Craddock, A. L.	Paterson, T. M.
Dixon, M. H. N.	Pritchard, P. M. M.
Durno, D.	Rankin, H. W. S.
Elliott-Binns, C. P. E.	Shepherd, F. G. G.
Finnie, J. S.	Stewart, A. B.
Fouin, F. L. P.	Stewart, T. I.
Freeman, P.	Stuart, D. R. M.
Harkness, J. N.	Taylor, A. J.
Hedgcock, Rev. W. P.	Thomas, H. W.
Hendry, D. W. W.	Williams, D. L.
Herron, K.	Wilson, A. T. M.
Hewlings, N. J. P.	

Chairman of Council's report

The Chairman of the Council, Dr M. J. Linnett, presented the report of the Council. Speaking as a Midlander, he welcomed the site of the 1978 meeting and admired the amount of work going on within the faculty, especially in research and education.

National Health Service

Dr Linnett noted that the NHS Act of 1977 had

absorbed the NHS (Vocational Training) Act and that the draft regulations for implementing this were still awaited, despite the "remarkable accord" of the general-practice bodies which had been consulted.

He reported that most trainees wanted some tangible evidence of their progress and had made their wishes clear in several regions. In an analysis of the 1,582 candidates who had taken the college examination since May 1976 the relevance of training to success in the examination in the younger age group was shown by the fact that of 89 candidates below the age of 30 who had not been trainees only nine per cent achieved a mark of 65 per cent or above, whereas of the 557 candidates in that age group who had been trainees 24 per cent achieved a comparable performance.

He noted that in May 1978 there were again about 500 applicants sitting the examination.

March Journal

The Chairman referred to the March issue of the *College Journal* which had contained four important papers by Dr Alastair Donald, Professor Marshall Marinker, Dr David Metcalfe and Professor James McCormick, and Dr Donald Irvine. He hoped that the debate which they had initiated at the Council meeting in December would be continued throughout the faculties.

Standards

Dr Linnett referred to the phrase 'standards of practice' which, for him, meant the examination, day by day, in the place where we work, of what we do, how we do it, and how it can be bettered. Thus, raising standards in general practice was not an elitist obsession but a stimulating and rewarding exercise for everyone in this particular branch of medicine.

He noted that the devolution of activity from the centre to the periphery of the College was running parallel to the devolution of many aspects of care from the centralized hospital clinic to the primary health care team—the family practice. The College had therefore to accept, in every faculty, the responsibility of helping its members, through continuing education, to meet their new commitments. Nobody who did not practise family medicine could do this for us—we had to do it ourselves.

Research Division Executive

The Chairman announced the approval of considerable further support for general-practice research studies. The Medical Research Council had awarded a five-year extension to the Oral Contraception Study at a cost of £394,000; work at the Manchester Unit was continuing on the Attitudes to Pregnancy Study, and the pilot Hormone Replacement Therapy Trial had been completed. The recent epidemic of whooping cough had stimulated the active interest of several of the units. At Swansea there was a prospective study of the natural history of bacteriologically confirmed disease among

families in West Glamorgan. The natural history of the disease was also being studied by the Birmingham Research Unit using both computer recorded data in a six-year follow-up and retrospectively using disease indexes. The Epidemic Observation Unit in Surrey, with the help of the Medical Research Council, was studying the effect of erythromycin in the prophylaxis of whooping cough among the contacts of bacteriologically confirmed cases of the disease.

15 Princes Gate

Dr Linnett reported that the planning authorities had now given permission to rationalize the combined uses of numbers 14 and 15 Princes Gate. Work had started on making communicating passages between the two buildings, electric wiring had been started, and it was hoped to begin to bring residential accommodation on the top floor into use during the summer.

The President had written to all provosts suggesting that faculties might wish to help, as they had done in the past with number 14, in the redecoration and furnishing of the new accommodation.

Assistant Honorary Secretary

Dr Linnett welcomed an appointment for one year only of an extra Officer of Council, Dr John Hasler, who had been elected Assistant Honorary Secretary.

The Chairman concluded his address thanking Mr James Wood and the administrative staff at Princes Gate for all their work throughout the year and the Midland Faculty for organizing the Silver Jubilee Spring Meeting, which had proved such a success.

Motions

There were no motions from the faculties and the meeting ended at 11.00 hours.

William Pickles Lecture

The William Pickles Lecture was delivered by Dr P. Freeling, FRCGP, Senior Lecturer in the Department of General Practice at St George's Hospital Medical School, London. Dr Freeling spoke on "Those who can" and his lecture has been published in full in the June issue of this *Journal*. Dr Freeling was accorded a standing ovation.

OBITUARY

M. J. Fenton, MB, CH.B, MRCP

Dr M. J. Fenton, General Practitioner and Emeritus Consultant Dermatologist, died in December 1977 at the age of 77.

Michael Julius Fenton was born in Leeds. His early life was spent at Sheffield and he graduated in medicine from the University of Sheffield in 1924. For many years he practised in Brixton, where he soon became interested in dermatology. After serving as Clinical Assistant in the Skin Department of King's College Hospital he became Consultant Dermatologist to Battersea General Hospital and retained the post until his retirement in 1964, when he was appointed Emeritus Consultant in Dermatology. Thus he was one of the few general practitioners to retain his position with the regional hospital board as a consultant in his specialty. He also held positions in immunization clinics of the local authorities at Stockwell, Islington, and Southwark from 1927 until the time of his death.

Dr Fenton was a founder member of the Royal College of General Practitioners, and was awarded an Upjohn Travelling Fellowship in 1962. He was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine, and was a member of the British Medical Association for over 50 years, serving in turn as Secretary, Treasurer, and Chairman of the Lambeth and Southwark Division. He was also a representative at Annual General Meetings of the BMA

on many occasions between 1929 and 1962.

Having served in the Royal Flying Corps during the First World War and as a medical officer in the Royal Canadian Air Force during the Second, he retained his interest in aviation medicine and became a medical examiner to the Civil Aviation Authority. A month before his death he successfully took a course in aviation medicine at the RAF Institute at Farnborough. He was also interested in hypnosis and was a Past President of the British Society of Medical and Dental Hypnosis.

His interests were many and diverse. A long-distance runner for his university, he retained his interest in sport as a medical officer in amateur boxing in the Olympic Games in 1948, and in the Maccabiah in Israel in 1950 and 1957. He was a skilled amateur conjurer and was a member of the Magic Circle and the former Magicians' Club. He was a Freeman of the City of London, a Liveryman of the Society of Apothecaries, a Council Member of the City Livery Club and the United Wards Club, Vice-President of the Portsoken Ward Club, and a member of the City Pickwick Club.

Dr Fenton remained in single-handed practice for over 40 years and continued to see patients up to the time of his death. He is survived by his wife, Gladys, and two daughters to whom we offer our sympathy.

L. T. NEWMAN