

ARTHRITIS

Mr David Ennals, Secretary of State for Social Services, has estimated that there were 27,400 arthroplasties of which it is thought that just under half or about 12,500 were hip replacements for arthritis.

PRESCRIPTIONS FOR ORAL CONTRACEPTIVES

In 1976, 5,939,000 prescriptions for oral contraceptives were dispensed in England and Wales compared with 1,357,000 in 1974.

PROGRESS IN HEALTH PLANNING

The Scottish Health Service Planning Council hopes to produce during 1978 recommendations on services for the elderly, for persons with mental disorder, and the whole field of child health.

CANCER STUDY GRANTS

Yamagiwa-Yoshida Memorial Grants

The Yamagiwa-Yoshida Memorial International Cancer Study Grants are designed to enable investigators of any nationality to gain experience in, or make comparative studies of, special techniques in both the biological and clinical aspects of cancer research.

The grants are available only for study outside the applicant's country of residence since they are intended to accelerate and encourage international collaborative activities. They are awarded for periods not exceeding 90 days.

Awards are being offered for research on cancer and will be granted to experienced investigators who have demonstrated their ability for independent research and who wish to broaden their experience by a period of study at a single institution in another country.

Further details of both Japanese and American grants can be obtained from the International Union Against Cancer, Rue du Conseil-Général 3, 1205 Geneva, Switzerland.

HEALTH SERVICE COMMISSIONER

Ambulance services

The Health Service Commissioner has invited a regional health authority, as a matter of urgency, to define the time limit, possibly in consultation with the Department of Health and Social Security, between a family practitioner's request for an ambulance and its arrival *either* at the patient's home *or* at hospital, in order to ensure that members of the ambulance service and family practitioners alike are in no doubt of the precise meaning of time limits set by general practitioners when requesting ambulance services.

This recommendation follows a complaint in which it emerged that a general practitioner requested an ambulance "within an hour", meaning that he wanted the patient to reach the hospital within this time, whereas the ambulance control officers said that they had assumed that "within an hour" meant that the ambulance should arrive to pick up the patient within an hour of the request.

Reference

Health Service Commissioner (1978). Second Report for Session 1977-78, p. 127-130. London: HMSO.

Failure to provide a service

The Health Service Commissioner has recommended that an area health authority should apologize to a complainant and his wife for failure to provide a service which arose when a consultant did not see a patient who had been referred with a letter from a general practitioner requesting an appointment "this morning".

Reference

Health Service Commissioner (1978). Second Report for Session 1977-78, p. 104-105. London: HMSO.

Essential information

The Health Service Commissioner, in his report for the four months ending March 1978 has recommended to a health authority that "revised arrangements be made to ensure that essential information (about patients' discharge from hospital) is provided to family practitioners more promptly in future than in the case he had considered".

Reference

Health Service Commissioner (1978). Second Report for Session 1977-78, p. 20. London: HMSO.

CORRECTION

In the May 1978 *Journal* it was incorrectly stated that Dr Brackenridge was the first chairman of an area health authority to be a general practitioner in active practice.

In fact Dr Ivan Clout, OBE, MA, MRCP, General Practitioner, Crawley, Sussex was the first general practitioner to have such an appointment and is still Chairman of the Surrey Area Health Authority.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GRANTS FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

Sir,

I would like to comment on a short news item (May *Journal*, p. 307) in which it was stated that none of the studies funded by the Biomedical Research Committee were from general practice, implying that there is no research in

general practice funded by the Secretary of State for Scotland.

The Scottish Home and Health Department have two principal grant-giving bodies for research: one is the Biomedical Research Committee and the other is the Health Services Research Committee. The Biomedical Research Committee, as its name would imply, is concerned with projects of a scientific

nature and it is therefore very uncommon for projects for general practice to be appropriate to this Committee. The Health Services Research Committee on the other hand is concerned with both clinical and operational research and it is not unusual for projects from general practice to be reviewed by this Committee. Details of the amounts of money