LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CHRISTMAS FAYRE

Sir,

The College building echoed with a fanfare from three young buglers when Mrs David Owen, wife of the Foreign Secretary, opened the Christmas Fayre at 11.00 hours on Saturday, 25 November. Brisk trade soon followed, and the stalls were almost empty by mid-afternoon.

A raffle for a picture by Dr John Horder and an elegant umbrella donated by Asprey's, a tombola, and a tremendous number of stalls—teddy bears, jewellery, bakery, food (which offered splendid varieties of homemade jams, preserves, and other goodies), drinks, books, toys, gramophone records, nearly new clothes, trinkets, and last but not least, a lunch refreshments stall in the dining-room—all made for a widely varied market which was certainly appreciated by those who had queued since 9.00 hours on a cold brisk morning.

The fact that the net takings approached £2,000, however, was not the only satisfactory result. That such a large number of members and their families should have worked so hard and effectively for several weeks in preparation for this event was perhaps forgotten in the hurry and bustle of the day. However, it is important to record that, under the friendly unruffled leadership of Mrs Mary Price, a most happy collegiate gathering of doctors and their families and friends was achieved. The goodwill, friendship, and support (perhaps not inappropriately called Christmas spirit!) which was so willingly given was greatly appreciated and contributed wonderfully to the success of the day.

May I thank all who played a part, and in particular Maria and Jack White, who had their weekend so noisily invaded, and whose support, with all the other College staff, was so invaluable.

EKKE KUENSSBERG
President
Royal College of General Practitioners
14 Princes Gate
London SW7 1PU.

Sir,

I should be most grateful if you would allow me to express through your columns my thanks to the Metropolitan faculties who helped to make the Christmas Fayre such a success.

Without their support it would not have been possible to achieve such a happy day, nor raise the sum of £2,000 towards fitting and furnishing Number 14, Princes Gate.

MARY PRICE
Organizer
28 Bishops Close
Ham
Richmond
Surrey.

SELECTING TRAINERS

Sir,

Dr Ian McKee's comments in *World Medicine* (15 November 1978) about the College and the criteria for selecting trainers prompted me to read again the article by Dr Hasler (June *Journal*, p.352) on training practices in the Oxford region.

I was dismayed at the criteria of both the Oxford Region and the North of England Region, where they insist on new trainers having passed the MRCGP examination (but why not also the old ones?). I consider this is presumptuous and totally unacceptable.

The criteria laid down by the Joint Committee on Postgraduate Training for General Practice (1976) lists seven criteria, all as important as each other. The fourth (clinical competence) states that competence *may be* assessed by possession of the MRCGP diploma by examination, but it also lists five other suggestions.

Sir, since when have qualifications meant anything? Letters imply only a level of academic attainment; they have very little to do with professional ability. Just because the letters 'MRCGP' appear at the end of the name, it does not mean that the candidate is likely to be a better trainer.

In Kent, we do not accept that the MRCGP is a necessary qualification; indeed I would at present actively resist this. Our selection is based on the character, ability, experience, and desire to be involved in training; the personality of the candidate is probably the most important single criterion. I have no idea how many of our trainers have the MRCGP, but I consider the training offered in this area is as good as in any other. I do not even know if all the general practitioner members of the Selection Committee have this qualification, nor do I consider it important.

We assess each candidate and his practice on the merits presented to us and judge accordingly. We are not influenced by College directives or even recommendations from other regions: we select those we consider most suited for the job of training.

Sir, for any region to impose the MRCGP as a basic qualification is an insult to colleagues in general practice, and should be withdrawn. The criteria of the Joint Committee are sufficient guidance for selection. If those selecting cannot make a choice without insisting on the MRCGP, then I suggest they are unable to assess candidates properly and should make way for those who can.

JOHN C. OAKLEY
Chairman, Kent Trainer Selection Committee
116 St Gregory's Crescent
Gravesend
Kent DA12 4JW.

References

Joint Committee on Postgraduate Training for General Practice (1976). *Criteria for the Selection of Trainers in General Practice.* London: JCPTGP.

McKee, I. (1978). Dr Saust, MRCGP. *World Medicine*, **14**, No. 4, 105-106.

MEDICAL RECORDS

Sir,

Occasional Paper 5 by Zander *et al.* (1978) on medical records in general practice is to be welcomed and applauded for the excellence of its content and the style of its presentation. I read it fascinated, delighted and filled with admiration, and put it down with a sigh and thought, "Ah yes, but not, alas, for me".

It is right that the College should champion such excellence but it is a great pity that more was not made of the already existing Aldeburgh system which contains the essentials and works within the existing records system, thereby avoiding the expense and accommodation problems of the A4 format.

Whereas the counsels of excellence of Dr Zander and his colleagues are likely to be followed by the relatively few enthusiasts, the Aldeburgh system (Tait, 1977) is for the man in the street, for here and now.

For most of us in the middle range of