

recent meeting in the House of Commons. It is made up of sociologists and social workers, specialists in the field of alcoholism, an economist, doctors from various disciplines and members of Parliament. The committee does not intend to pin its hopes on any one answer. It feels that education of health and social workers concerning alcoholism should go along with teaching in the schools and a briefing of the population as a whole. This activity should prepare the way for more effective legal control over the price and availability of alcohol and its advertising.

The committee believes that alcohol may overtake tobacco as the main public health problem of the 1990s. The rate of alcoholism is increasing fastest among women and young people. The medical profession has three times the cirrhosis rate of the general population. The general practitioner is exceptional if he knows one in six of the alcoholics on his list. The chairman of this committee is Professor Eric Wilkes, of the Department of Community Medicine at the University of Sheffield.

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 Ayrshire and Arran Vocational Training Scheme. This scheme is recognized by the Royal College of General Practitioners for the purpose of the MRCGP examination.

MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY

The Department of Medical Genetics, University of Manchester, in association

with the Muscular Dystrophy Group of Great Britain, will hold a one-day course on "The Clinical and Genetic Management of Muscular Dystrophy and Related Neuromuscular Diseases in Children" on Wednesday, 22 October 1980, in the Lecture Theatre, St Mary's Hospital, Hathersage Road, Manchester.

Further information can be obtained from The Welfare Secretary, Muscular Dystrophy Group of Great Britain, Natrass House, 35 Macaulay Road, London SW4 0QP. Tel: 01-720 8055.

DENTAL HEALTH OF ADULTS

The dental health of adults in Britain has improved according to Volume 1 of a report on adult dental health conducted in collaboration with the Department of Health, University of Birmingham Dental School, for the United Kingdom Health Departments.

One simple yet useful indicator of dental health in adults is comparing the proportion of people of all ages who have no remaining natural teeth. Among people aged 45 to 54 in 1968, 41 per cent had no natural teeth, but in 1978 this had fallen to 29 per cent.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE SURVEILLANCE CENTRE

The Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre of the Public Health Laboratory Service was opened on 11 July 1980 by Sir Henry Yellowlees, Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health and Social Security. This is the first national unit in a specialty of community medicine with service responsibilities to support local community physicians and others in the investigation and control of communicable disease through the laboratory services

of the country.

The centre has three main functions:

1. Surveillance, that is, the collection of data on communicable disease, its analysis and interpretation to provide information and its rapid dissemination to all those who require it, enabling the rapid identification and control of cases and outbreaks of disease.
2. Disease control. Advice and assistance to those locally responsible for the investigation and control of communicable disease.
3. Teaching and training in communicable disease control.

CARE CALL

The Seton Group have introduced a new piece of equipment to help those caring for an elderly, disabled, or temporarily disorientated patient. It is called 'Care Call' and consists of a weight sensor, an alarm buzzer and beacon, and a call button. This can be placed under the castor of a patient's bed and can activate an alarm system as soon as the bed has been vacated, which may indicate that the patient is at risk.

Further information can be obtained from the Seton Group, Medlock Street, Oldham, Lancs.

PHARMACEUTICAL PROPRIETORS

The notional salary for pharmaceutical proprietors for 1979 has been confirmed as £8,565 per year.

Reference

Pharmaceutical Journal (1980). Notional salary for 1979. 28 June.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From Dame Elizabeth Ackroyd

MEDICAL RECORDS

Sir,
I warmly welcome Professor D. Metcalfe's article, "Why not let patients keep their own records?" (*July Journal*, p.420).

The view of the Patients Association is, wittingly or not, laid on the line in that article. However, we have met

nothing but counter arguments from the medical profession. I hope that Professor Metcalfe has more success, since he cogently answers all the points made by the opposition.

ELIZABETH ACKROYD
Chairman of the
Patients Association

11 Dartmouth Street
London SW1H 9BN.

THE CONSULTATION

Sir,
It was interesting to read Professor P. S. Byrne and Dr C. Heath's article on non-verbal behaviour (*June Journal*, p.327), and also to have read the earlier work *Doctors Talking to Patients*. I am sure we can all recognize ourselves to a greater or lesser degree in the consultations which are quoted. Have we become so battle weary that we are simply