

dent committee comprising representatives of a wide range of organizations with a special interest in statistics.

The 1980 Conference will be held at the Royal Society, London SW1 on Friday, 12 December. It will be the first in the series to take health as its theme. The papers will review critically a wide range of health statistics and explore desirable future developments.

Full details can be obtained from the conference secretary, Dr Ian Russell, Medical Care Research Unit, 21 Claremont Place, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 4AA.

MEDISCENE

MediScene is the new journal of the Overseas Doctors' Association in the UK, and its first issue was published in July 1980.

The first issue includes an article by Patrick Jenkin, MP, Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Security, in which he writes that he "wants to see more overseas doctors taking a full part in the management of the National Health Service."

Further information can be obtained from the Editor, Dr Derek Meakin, Europress Limited, 68 Chester Road, Hazel Grove, Stockport, Cheshire.

OMBUDSMAN

Mr Cecil Clothier, QC, the Health Service Ombudsman, in his Annual Report for 1979/80 published in July 1980,

suggested that his power should be extended so that he can start an investigation into an administrative failure of his own accord.

ENGLISH BOARD FOR NURSING, MIDWIFERY AND HEALTH VISITING

Dr Gerard Vaughan, Minister of Health, has announced the appointment of Professor Baroness McFarlane of Llandaff as Chairman of the English Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting, which was established on 15 September 1980. The Board is expected to have an innovatory role in shaping the future organization of the education and training of nurses, midwives, and health visitors.

Baroness McFarlane, MA, M.Sc, SRN, SCM, HV, TUT. CERT., FRCN, is currently Professor and Head of the Department of Nursing at the University of Manchester. She is also Chairman of the Joint Board of Clinical Nursing Studies. She was formerly a member of the Royal Commission on the National Health Service.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS SOCIETY

The Multiple Sclerosis Society has issued a new leaflet *So You Have Multiple Sclerosis?* This is available, free of charge, on request to the Multiple Sclerosis Society, 286 Munster Road, Fulham, London SW6 6BE. Copies can also be obtained from branches throughout the United Kingdom.

GENERAL PRACTICE FINANCE CORPORATION

The General Practice Finance Corporation's Annual Report, issued in July 1980, reports a rising demand over the last two years for loans from doctors wishing to buy or improve surgery premises.

The Corporation made 180 loans, totalling more than four and a half million, to 346 NHS doctors in the financial year 1979/80.

Since it started in 1967, the Corporation has now made loans to over five and a half thousand doctors in Great Britain, lending over eight and a half million pounds during the last two years.

The new Health Services Bill empowers the Corporation to buy surgeries from doctors and lease them back. This file will be used, at least initially, in respect of new premises built, or adapted premises provided by groups of doctors. The Corporation hopes that this will enable more doctors who do not wish to undertake heavy capital commitments to practise from modern surgeries.

PRE-REGISTRATION POSTS

The house physician rotation in primary care was started at the University of Southampton on 1 February 1979, and six house physicians have now completed this appointment.

It is understood that pre-registration posts in primary care have recently been approved at St Mary's Hospital, London.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From Lord Taylor of Harlow

FREQUENT USERS

Sir,
Dr R. M. McGregor of Hawick, whose obituary appeared in your issue of August 1980 (p. 510), made a discovery of outstanding importance. As a result of a survey of over 11,000 doctor/patient contacts, he showed that 15 per cent of his patients were responsible for over 47 per cent of the illnesses he saw in the course of a year (McGregor, 1950). Three years later, at the Royal Society of Medicine (McGregor, 1953), he showed that the accident-prone patients in his practice were to a large extent also the illness-prone.

He thus, for the first time, isolated

the 'weaker brethren', who are indeed both physiologically and psychologically less capable of resisting the slings and arrows which fall upon all of us. In *Good General Practice* (Taylor, 1954) I called these people the "multiple-ailment heavy burden patients" and gave a preliminary description of them (pp. 420-423). As far as I know Dr McGregor's pioneer work has not been followed up. Here, surely, is a job waiting for the descriptive clinicians and epidemiologists of the College. Are we (the patients) made that way? Or is it our early training? Or is it a neat balance of a little of each? Sooner or later, the pathologists and biochemists will have to come in, but first the accurate natural history of these patients must be recorded, compared, and described

fully. Meanwhile, Dr McGregor deserves a permanent place in the College's Hall of Fame for these outstanding observations.

TAYLOR OF HARLOW

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References

- McGregor, R. M. (1950). The work of a family doctor. *Edinburgh Medical Journal*, 57, 433-453.
- McGregor, R. M. (1953). The accident-prone in general practice. *British Medical Journal*, 2, 1306-1308.
- Taylor, S. (1954). *Good General Practice*. London: Oxford University Press.