
WHY NOT?

Why not start a practice museum?

K. M. SOUTER, MB, MRCCGP

General Practitioner, Wakefield

HAVE you ever considered how boring waiting for appointments can be? Does the ubiquitous pile of old magazines relieve the monotony? As an alternative, why not do as we did and start a practice museum?

It had often been our proud boast that we were an old, established practice, yet when a compulsory purchase order was served on us we panicked. We would lose our site, our identity, our heritage! It was then that we decided to start a practice museum.

We started with the junk cupboard, a repository for all the old medical instruments which had fallen redundant over the years. In it we found surgeon's kits, postmortem sets, 'sutures as used by Professor Lister', and even a couple of nineteenth century scarificators for the letting of blood.

Next came the history of the practice. Some research through back copies of the *Medical Directory* to 1847 enabled us to construct our geneological skeleton. Obituaries in the *Lancet*, *British Medical Journal* and local archives gave flesh to the bones, and correspondence with the families of our predecessors yielded a batch of photographs which added substance to the biographies we had compiled.

The Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine were most helpful in supplying details of the history of medical instruments, and the Society of Apothecaries were instrumental in obtaining copies of our predecessors' qualifying certificates.

Having assembled our material, we designed a suitable exhibition case for display in the main corridor of the new surgery. We have found that patients are intrigued by odd facts relating to epidemics of plague and cholera which have affected the town and by the past trade in body-snatching. In addition, we have been able to give them an insight into the development of family medicine from the apothecary-surgeon of yesteryear to the general practitioner of today. The research itself has proved both enlightening and absorbing. So why not do as we did and start a practice museum?

Address for correspondence

Dr K. M. Souter, 59 Forest Close, Wakefield, West Yorkshire.

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The author with some of the instruments on display in the practice museum. (Photograph courtesy of the Yorkshire Post.)

Aspirin and Reye's syndrome

Histology or necropsy records of 13 children with salicylate intoxication were examined for the features of Reye's syndrome (a primarily paediatric disease of unknown aetiology, characterized by acute encephalopathy and hepatic dysfunction following a prodromal viral illness). The findings support previous epidemiological studies which suggest a causal relation between aspirin and Reye's syndrome.

Source: Starko, K. M. & Mullick, F. G. (1983). Hepatic and cerebral pathology findings in children with fatal salicylate intoxication: Further evidence for a causal relation between salicylate and Reye's syndrome. *Lancet*, 1: 326-329.