
NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sensory loss in old age — Age Concern meeting

This meeting, held at Subohm House, Birmingham, 12–13 June 1984, drew attention to the fact that families, friends and professional workers — not least general practitioners — are often unaware of the degree of sensory impairment (impaired sight and hearing) affecting their elderly patients and the degree of functional impairment resulting in their day-to-day lives. In addition, the patients themselves do not always recognize the early signs of such impairment and even when observed it tends to be regarded by them as the price of the passage of the years. The deaf in particular often try to conceal the problem as they feel embarrassed, are aware of the social stigma involved and often feel that society is almost contemptuous towards them and certainly indifferent to their particular needs. Finally, people with sensory impairment often tend to be overpessimistic as to whether anything can be done to help them.

If this situation is to be remedied, there is a need for better education of the patients themselves, their careers, friends and professional advisers — especially general practitioners — in the special problems of sensory impairment among old people and the manner in which it should be handled. Optimal care of the elderly implies not only careful management of disease but also more attention to the functional problems in the patients' day-to-day lives. Better design of housing is also essential, with improved lighting and more appropriate decoration. Improved publicity is also required to promote prevention and more careful management of established impairment. Residential homes also need to pay much greater attention to the needs of old people with visual and auditory impairment.

The above measures are all concerned with the need for a change in attitude but the practical requirements are even clearer. People with sensory impairment need to be identified and registered. The resultant functional disability must be scaled and its effect on day-to-day life estimated. Only then can appropriate counselling take place, advising corrective measures (when they are available) and helping the patient to adapt to his disability, alongside education in the aids and allowances available. Such management seeks to ensure that the patient spends his remaining years enjoying an optimal lifestyle.

There is also much need for research to draw attention to the problem of sensory impairment and to devise the best means of handling it.

Finally it was felt that the key contribution to this work should come from the general practitioner who is familiar with the patients and their families. Thus he is the best

person to co-ordinate and direct the care of old people with visual and auditory impairment, although the role of nurses, health visitors, social and voluntary workers would also be important. The general practitioner was also felt to be the best person to organize and direct the research necessary in this field.

A. J. TULLOCH

New Director of the National Development Team for Mentally Handicapped People

Norman Fowler, Secretary of State for Social Services, has appointed Dr George Kerr as the new Director of the National Development Team. Dr Kerr has been a consultant in mental handicap since 1968, and medical administrator at Dovenby Hall Hospital in West Cumbria since 1975 where he has been involved in establishing community services for mentally handicapped people and their families in collaboration with the local authority and voluntary bodies. He is a Fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. Dr Kerr takes up his appointment in the Autumn.

The National Development Team is an independent body which visits and advises health and social services authorities and voluntary bodies in England on the planning and development of their mental handicap services. It has a panel of members including doctors, nurses, psychologists, social workers, administrators and parents of mentally handicapped people. There are currently two Associate Directors of the Team — one with a nursing and the other with a social services background. Dr Kerr will take over from Professor G B S Simon who has been the Team's Director since it was set up in 1976.

The Balint Society Essay Prize

The Council of the Balint Society has awarded the Balint Society Essay Prize of £250 jointly to Dr Oliver Samuels and Dr Stanley Levenstein of Cape Town.

Research Fellowships in General Practice

The Scottish Council for Postgraduate Medical Education has appointed three Fellows, two on a half-time basis for two years and one on a whole-time basis for a year. They are: Dr T. P. Usherwood, Dr J. P. M. Campbell and Dr L. J. Toop; the first will be attached to the Department of General Practice at Glasgow University and the other two to the Department of General Practice at Edinburgh University.

The College of Family Physicians of Canada

The College of Family Physicians of Canada was formed two years after the Royal College of General Practitioners and has developed similarly. It currently has about 7,000 members. Although the population of Canada is approximately half that of Britain, there are relatively more doctors per population and in some provinces there is a general practitioner/patient ratio of 1:1,100.

The governing body of the College is the Board of Directors, the equivalent of the Council of the British College, and this meets for about two days at a time twice a year. The responsibility between Board meetings lies with an Executive Committee of eight people which is chaired by the President. The membership of the Executive of the College is:

- The President
- The President-elect
- The past-President
- Chairman of the Board of Directors
- Honorary Treasurer
- plus three 'Members at large' elected to represent the membership.

The Executive work with a full-time Executive Director who has substantial responsibilities.

Meeting of the Board of Directors

The Board of Directors of the College of Family Physicians recently invited the Royal College of General Practitioners to send four representatives to the Board Meeting which preceded the 26th Annual Scientific Assembly of the Canadian College, held in Vancouver in July 1984. The Royal College of General Practitioners was pleased to accept the invitation and was represented by the President, Dr J. A. R. Lawson, the Honorary Treasurer, Dr D. G. Garvie, the Chairman of the Communications Division, Dr D. J. Pereira Gray, and the immediate past-Honorary Secretary of Council, Dr J. C. Hasler.

On the first of the two-day series of meetings three of the British team gave short talks on different aspects of the British College's activities and answered questions from the Board. Dr Hasler talked about the development of general practice in the United Kingdom and the College's relationship with government. He considered that complacency was one of the major threats facing the British general practitioner and spoke of the importance of the forthcoming Green Paper on the Family Practitioner Services which was expected in the autumn. Dr Pereira Gray spoke about the role of colleges as publishers

and reported how the RCGP was able to print short articles in its monthly *Journal*, longer papers as *Occasional Papers* or *Reports from General Practice* and had recently begun to publish books. Samples of the RCGP publications were demonstrated at the meeting.

Dr Garvie spoke about the relationship between the College and the pharmaceutical industry. He noted how this had become more complex in recent years since some pharmaceutical companies were no longer content to advertise their name or image and pressure from marketing directors was changing. He saw the recent response by the General Purposes Committee of the College as an important method of defining policies for the College.

Convocation and opening ceremony

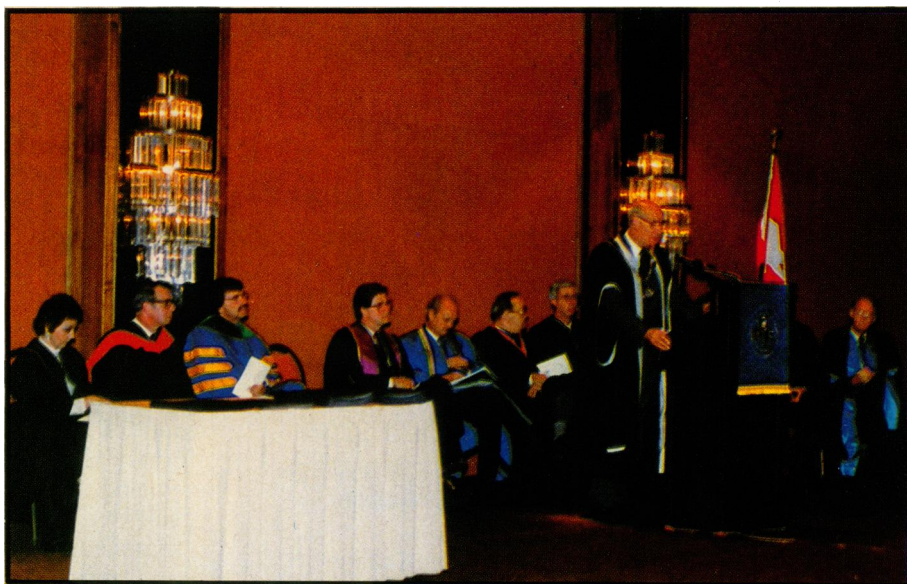
The opening ceremony of the Scientific Assembly, to which the British doctors were invited, was held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Vancouver on 8 July 1984. The President of the College of Family Physicians of Canada, Dr R. Bourret, was in the chair. The platform party included representatives of many medical and nursing associations in North America, including the American Academy of Family Physicians. The only European representative was Dr J. A. R. Lawson.

The platform party was introduced to the meeting and then all the representatives came to the microphone to give greetings from the organizations they represented.

Following the presentation of the Family Physician of the Year, Dr Frederick Goodine, MD, the College of Family Physicians of Canada conferred Honorary Membership on the President of the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences, who was unfortunately unable to receive it in person owing to illness.

Honorary Membership of the College of Family Physicians of Canada was then conferred on Dr J. A. R. Lawson, OBE, PRCGP. The citation read by Dr Donald Rice, Executive Director of the Canadian College, described Dr Lawson's involvement in the Far East in the Second World War, his extensive involvement over many years in the Royal College of General Practitioners, his chairmanship of Council, chairmanship of the Joint Committee on Postgraduate Training for General Practice, chairmanship of the Executive Committee of WONCA, and now the Presidency of the Royal College of General Practitioners.

The platform party (seated from left to right) includes: Ms G. Parker, Canadian Nurses Association; Dr W. A. Webber, Dean, Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia; Dr H. E. Holverson, President, American Academy of Family Physicians; Dr L. E. McLeod, President, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada; Dr R. Bourret, 1983-1984 President, CFPC; Dr E. L. Coffin, President, Canadian Medical Association; Dr O. M. McCallum, President, American Board of Family Practice; and, to the right of the podium, Dr D. I. Rice, Executive Director, CFPC. (Photo: CFPC - Update)



Dr Lawson then delivered the 1984 W. Victor Johnston Oration, the first British general practitioner to do so since Dr P. S. Byrne, another President of the College. Dr Lawson referred to the main theme of the Scientific Meeting, 'The art and science of family medicine', and said he wished to describe the crest of his College to show how its many symbols reflected several fundamental features of general practice/family medicine throughout the world. Among the topics he discussed were home visiting, which he felt was an important, if sometimes unpopular, aspect of the work, prescribing, the relationship

between doctors and nurses, and out of hours work.

Following the Victor Johnston Oration, the College of Family Physicians of Canada admitted Life Members, Fellows and Certificants in Family Medicine and there was then a reception for all those attending.

During the course of the visit the Royal College of General Practitioners entertained the Officers of the College of Family Physicians of Canada to dinner and were guests of the Executive Committee of the Canadian College at another dinner later in the week.

DIARY DATES

Family therapy

The application of family therapy ideas to family practice continues to create interest. The Institute of Family Therapy are holding a series of introductory workshops on alternative Monday evenings starting on Monday 8 October, 1984. These will be led by Dr Eia Asen and Dr Peter Tomson.

Applications to: Mrs O Macklin, British Postgraduate Medical Federation, 33 Millman Street, London WC1N 3EJ.

Also on alternative Monday evenings starting on Monday 1 October, an ongoing workshop for doctors with some experience of family therapy ideas is being held at the Royal College of General Practitioners, 14 Princes Gate, London SW7 1PU. It is being led by Dr Bryan Lask, Department of Psychology, Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street, London WC1, to whom applications should be made.

Sports medicine congress

The French Medical Football Association is organizing a congress on sports medicine and a football tournament, to be held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in March 1985. Both

events are open to doctors, pharmacists, dentists and kinesiologists. A diversified tour programme is scheduled.

Registrations may be made individually or by teams. For further information contact Dr P Bougoin, 28 impasse d'Austerlitz, 16000 Angouleme, France. Tel: 45923286.

Information please

The RCGP Information Service on General Practice would like to hear from practices who produce their own medical record cards and patient information leaflets. We would particularly welcome any samples which you may be able to send us so that we can pass on helpful hints to other practices. Please send your samples with any further information to Ms M. A. Piggott, Senior Information Officer, 14 Princes Gate, Hyde Park, London SW7 1PU.