

tion could be undertaken, as proposed by the medical profession in Scotland. The implementation of this recommendation of the Greenfield report<sup>8</sup> would take advantage of the separate administrative structure of the health service in Scotland and give good data on which to base further developments.

To balance this shift to generic prescribing, the pharmaceutical industry needs to be given greater protection for its new products by extending the length of patent rights. This would not only ensure that research and development costs could be recouped over a longer period but would also enable the marketing of new drugs to be more gradual and allow more effective post-marketing surveillance to take place. It is in the interest of all concerned that a coherent strategy on prescribing should be defined and agreed upon. The delay in the publication of the government's Green Paper on primary care should not block developments which could encourage more effective and economic prescribing.

E.G. BUCKLEY

#### References

1. Chew R, Tealing-Smith G, Wells N. *Pharmaceuticals in seven nations*. London: Office of Health Economics, 1985.
2. Birch S. Relationship between increasing prescription charges and consumption in groups not exempt from charges. *J R Coll Gen Pract* 1986; **36**: 154-156.
3. Marsh GN. Stringent prescribing in general practice. *Br Med J* 1981; **283**: 1159-1160.
4. Royal College of General Practitioners. *Prescribing — a suitable case for treatment, Occasional paper 24*. London: RCGP, 1984.
5. Donald JB. On-line prescribing by computer. *Br Med J* 1986, in press.
6. Archer M. What use is generic prescribing? *J R Coll Gen Pract* 1985; **35**: 293-295.
7. Hannay DR. *The symptom iceberg*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979.
8. Department of Health and Social Security. *Report of the informal working group on effective prescribing (Greenfield report)*. London: DHSS, 1983.

## Prescribers' Journal — the first 25 years

IN 1961 in an introduction to the first volume of *Prescribers' Journal*, Professor Max Rosenheim expressed the hope that a need of the practising doctor would be filled by the publication of signed review articles discussing trends in modern treatment. How well this has succeeded can be judged by the fact that since then virtually every readership survey looking at information about drugs has placed *Prescribers' Journal* in the top bracket for client acceptability.

The construction of the content of each volume has remained unchanged. Topics are chosen by a committee of management who then commission an author. The resulting article is then worked on by the committee whose aim is to produce succinct and practical guidance for all prescribers. There are usually two general practitioners on the committee, each serving for three years, so that, since its inception, 19 general practitioners have held office.

The first volume was sent free to all general practitioners, hospital doctors and clinical students, and others could obtain it for 6d a copy, post-free! It is still distributed free in the UK but is much more widely sold, mostly to overseas subscribers at £2.74 a volume. It is reproduced in Pakistan and more selectively in many other countries.

It has been an outstanding success in terms of publicity and the gratitude of practising doctors should go to the Editor, Dr J.L. Hunt, who has steered every volume out to print and to all those who have devoted time and expertise to supporting Max Rosenheim's original aim of 'promoting good prescribing'.



### 11th Conference of the World Organization of National Colleges, Academies and Academic Associations of General Practitioners/Family Physicians

The organizing committee of the 1986 WONCA Conference was pleased to hear at its last meeting that the 'break even' point in the numbers of registered delegates had been achieved. This will ensure the financial success of the conference. Much of the credit for this relates to the considerable financial support received from the pharmaceutical industry and other bodies. At a time of financial stringency affecting in particular the pharmaceutical industry, this support is evidence of the high regard in which the College is held. Support has also been forthcoming from the World Health Organization, the British Council and the Department of Health and Social Security.

At the most recent count delegates were registered from 32 different countries, with a particularly impressive number from Northern Europe and Australasia. As host organization, there is a particular responsibility on College members to give a welcome to their colleagues from overseas. This will be the largest international gathering of general practitioners/family physicians ever held in the United Kingdom, but the programme has been so arranged that there will be an opportunity for participation by everyone who so wishes. The accompanying social programme has been carefully arranged to offer delegates and their guests the opportunity to join in many traditional British activities.

The College is particularly pleased that the patron of the conference, Her Majesty the Queen, has consented to attend the government reception at the Science Museum on the last evening of the conference. She will be accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh, the patron of the College.

There is still time to register. Please contact the Conference Secretariat, Conference Associates WONCA, 27A Medway Street, London SW1P 2BD.