

Towards 2000: 11th WONCA Conference, June 1986

There was no dust to settle because the Barbican had been kept spotless throughout the conference, but there was an unmistakable air that something had finished. The WONCA notices were all coming down and students in their WONCA tee-shirts were disappearing. Here and there delegates from all parts of the world were sitting looking disconsolate, realizing that it was time to go home. It was a time for taking stock. What had it all been about, and why had it happened in the first place? At the closing ceremony the next meeting in Jerusalem in 1989 was mentioned, but Jerusalem was a long way away, and why should one travel?

The opening ceremony, with the razzmatazz of the Royal Marines, was followed by the welcoming reception with jazz bands, a town crier, flower girls and beefeaters. On the following days learned papers were presented on maternal and child health, health education, nutrition and community participation. In the free standing papers, doctors from many parts of the world spoke of their work in primary care. There was discussion, sometimes disagreement and sometimes excitement. Delegates could be seen chatting earnestly about a subject long after the session dealing with it had finished. Poster presentations resulted in groups of enthusiasts huddled together in various corners of conference rooms discussing how somebody from China dealt with a subject that was also a problem in the Philippines. The delegates and their spouses were taken on various tours and they saw Britain at its most beautiful, despite the cold weather. The food was good, the fireworks at the Guildhall banquet were dramatic and red tape was kept to a minimum.

So what was the point of it all, and will it be worth going to Jerusalem in 1989? Perhaps the most memorable aspect of the conference was looking around the Barbican Hall as a paper was presented and during the discussion afterwards, and realizing that 1300 doctors from 47 countries, some of them deeply divided politically, were meeting with one aim, to discuss common problems. As the discussions continued in the foyers or over coffee, one had the feeling that something not only good but dramatic was happening, and that the ideas and enthusiasms shared would have a much greater effect on the world than many summit conferences.

E.J.M.

The Green Paper

The Government's Green Paper on primary health care is billed as 'an agenda for discussion'. There are many suggestions in the paper which if implemented could considerably alter the way in which general practitioners in the United Kingdom work. In view of this it is important that members should read the Green Paper and discuss its contents within the faculties. Some of the points that members might care to consider are:

1. Whether there should be a statement of services that should be available to patients from each general practice.
2. The criteria and methods for a good practice allowance.
3. The methods whereby factual information about practices could be disseminated, for example through the local media.
4. The arrangement for controlling the entry of new doctors into practice, particularly in the inner cities — are they unduly restrictive?
5. The statutory procedures for dealing with patient's complaints and the composition and operation of medical service committees — do we wish to comment?

6. Is there a case to make a strong statement in support of the development of computerization in general practice stating why it is necessary and how it will contribute to the provision of high quality care in general practice?

7. What proportion of the doctor's income should be derived from capitation versus the proportion derived from allowances?

8. What comments should be made on the chapter on general dental services?

9. Pharmaceutical services: what comments should be made about the extended role for the pharmacist, changes in dispensing arrangements and changes in the classification system for medicines?

10. Should growth in the number of doctors be influenced? What would be the consequences of limiting the number of general practitioners?

11. What further comment is needed on economies that can be made to the drugs bill?

12. Do we support the proposal to appoint a professional team to make a study in one or two areas of England of the ways in which the primary care services are being coordinated, planned and delivered? Would we welcome a permanent monitoring system of this nature?

13. Inner cities: is there a need to attract younger vocationally trained doctors into the inner cities? If so, how can this be done? How can suitable practice premises be encouraged in inner cities? Does the cost rent scheme need to be more sensitive to local needs? Should experiments with different contractual arrangements for doctors in the inner cities be encouraged?

These are merely suggestions of some of the main matters that members might like to consider and discuss with fellow members in their faculties.

E.J.M.

Information folders from the RCGP

Two new information folders have been published by the College in the clinical and practice organization series. *Diabetes* is the title of a folder giving guidance on the general practice management of patients suffering from this disorder. It contains a protocol for the care of diabetic patients produced by a College working party, a booklet entitled *Why not look after your own diabetic patients?*, an information pack supplied by the British Diabetic Association, sample record cards and other material.

Diabetes is the second in the series of folders on clinical topics. The first dealt with cervical cytology, and further folders will be produced covering epilepsy, asthma, rheumatoid arthritis, hypertension and palliative care.

Practice premises provides guidance to the doctor wishing to develop his surgery premises. It contains articles on building a new surgery, converting new and old buildings and finance, and includes a series of illustrations. It also contains practical advice from an architect and a flow chart for a construction programme. It is the third in the series of practice organization folders, the others being *The age/sex register* and *Entering general practice*.

Both series of folders are available from the Central Sales Office at 14 Princes Gate, London SW7 1PU. The practice organization series costs £3 to members (£4 to non-members) per folder, and the clinical series costs £5 to members (£6 to non-members) per folder.

Recording blood pressure and smoking habits in Devon and Cornwall

This is the title of a report produced by a joint working party of the Devon and Cornwall Local Medical Committees and the Tamar Faculty of the RCGP. The working party has spent the last year looking at how general practitioners in the two counties record the blood pressure and smoking habits of their patients. All general practitioners in Devon and Cornwall were contacted and 49% replied giving details of their methods of screening. Many also sent in examples of the cards, stickers, stamps, letters and questionnaires used in their practice, and the best of these have been compiled in the report *Recording blood pressure and smoking habits in Devon and Cornwall*. The report also includes a draft prevention summary card designed by the working party which they believe will be valuable to general practitioners wishing to improve their delivery of preventive care.

The report costs £2.50 (free to general practitioners in Devon and Cornwall) and is available from Dr N. Bradley, 30 Barnfield Road, Exeter EX1 1RX.

Management appreciation courses

Participants on the third management appreciation course organized by the College are seen in the photograph with the course leaders Mrs Sally Irvine (standing, extreme right) and Mrs June Huntington (seated, second from left).

The courses aim to alert the participants to changes in the nature of general practice and the need for effective management. Participants on the courses, which are completely booked until March 1987, have found that their role as managers has been highlighted and developed, and that the appreciation of management skills has undoubtedly led to better patient care.



Participants on the third management appreciation course.

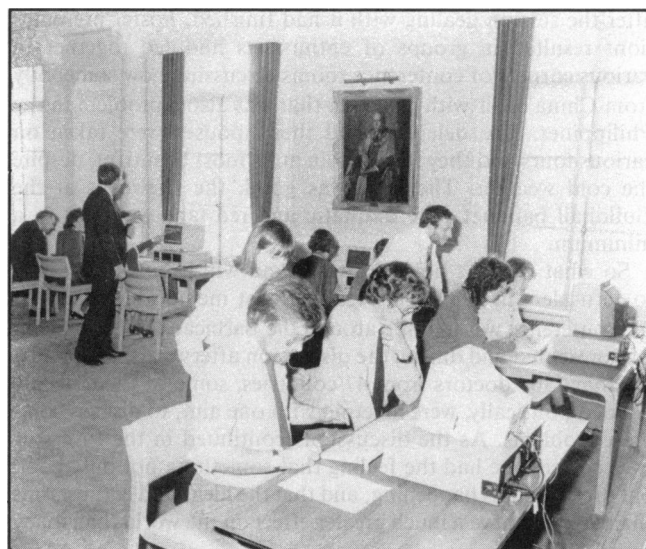
Terminal care

Terminal care is an integral part of general practice. The skill and compassion with which a doctor looks after those of his patients who are dying is one measure of the quality of his practice. However, there have been reports that doctors give inadequate care and that some doctors feel insufficiently educated to manage patients' anxiety and pain at this time. Other doctors find difficulty in mobilizing enough nursing support for these patients. Hospices are an invaluable resource in looking after terminally ill patients and the skills of doctors working in these institutions in managing pain and distress are universally valued. However, inadequacies in community care have led to their being regarded in some areas as alternatives to care by the primary health care team instead of a resource to help the team. In order

to determine ways to help general practitioners and the primary care team to improve their practice in this field a working party has been set up under the chairmanship of Dr John Berkeley. The problems that will be considered by this working party are how to educate and motivate general practitioners to carry out this work better, how to help doctors to change from a curing role to a caring one, and how to help the family and the carers to cope at this time. Any educational exercise will be based on the faculty structure and would hope to involve the whole team. Resources, such as a College information folder, are planned. The aim is to keep the care of these vulnerable people in the hands of their general practitioners, who may well have looked after them and their families for many years.

RCGP computer courses

There is still a good demand for the College's computer appreciation courses. Practice staff and general practitioners who would like to attend, should get in touch with the Information Technology Department, Royal College of General Practitioners, 14 Princes Gate, London SW7 1PU; telephone 01-581 3232.



Hands-on experience at an RCGP computer course.

Preventing disability in the United Kingdom

A seminar held in London in February 1986 and organized by the IMPACT Foundation to look at disablement concluded that a national strategy aimed at reducing avoidable disablement in the United Kingdom could cut the incidence of disability by at least 20%. A report entitled *Preventing disability in the United Kingdom* summarizes the conclusions of the conference and calls for the application of existing technology through present health services, with better management of available resources. It also highlights the need for a national strategy to maximize collaboration between public and private sectors, to agree priorities and to initiate the appropriate action for the prevention of avoidable disability. The report sets out a prospective agenda to achieve this.

Copies of the report may be obtained from Mrs Susan Calver, Secretary to the Director of IMPACT, Halfway, Clayton, Hassocks, Sussex; telephone 079 18-3540.

British Cancer Stamp Appeal

The British Cancer Stamp Appeal raises funds from the collection and sale of used postage stamps, stamp collections, foreign coins and cooperative stamps. It donates these funds to organizations dealing with research into cancer or the relief of cancer sufferers. The Appeal is also anxious to assist those victims of cancer who may need financial support, and would be pleased to hear from any general practitioner who may have patients in need of financial assistance. Posters advertising the availability of funds and requesting support in terms of donations are available from the Appeal.

Those wishing to request financial assistance or to offer support for fund raising can get in touch with the Appeal by writing to its director, Mr M.B. Davies, British Cancer Stamp Appeal, PO Box 29, Broadstairs, Kent CT10 2AA.

Hearing impairment in general practice

The Association of Teachers of Lipreading to Adults is concerned to ensure that general practitioners are fully aware of the problems experienced by adults with hearing impairment, and has drafted some guidelines on improving communication with adults with hearing difficulties.

Further details about the activities of ATLA and information on hearing problems may be obtained from the Chairman, Mrs Patricia Sherren, 6 Lavender Avenue, Worcester Park, Surrey KT4 8RR; telephone 01-337 3769.

Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) survey of disabled people

The Social Survey Division of the OPCS is carrying out a survey of disabled people in Britain, the first of its kind since 1968/9. The results of this survey will be used by the Department of Health and Social Security to help with the development of long term policies for social security benefits for disabled people.

Those included in the survey will be adults and children with significant disabilities of a physical, sensory or mental nature. The main aims of the survey are to provide estimates of the prevalence of significant disability in Great Britain by age and severity and type of disability and to collect information about the financial circumstances of disabled people, in particular their income and expenditure. The survey will also be an opportunity to assess the use of and need for health and social services.

Interviews are planned for later this year covering permanent residents in non-private households, and a random sample of communal establishments has been chosen where a sample of permanent residents will be interviewed.

Advertising

The Office of Fair Trading has asked for the views of the College about a review that the Office is currently undertaking of restrictions on advertising in the professions. It has been suggested that the restrictions on advertising in general are not in the public interest, and reduce the amount of information available to the public. The professions immediately affected are those of chiropody, physiotherapy and osteopathy. In the information that has been supplied by the Office of Fair Trading provision of information would seem to have been confused with advertising. The provision of information supplies facts about

the range of services available and the period during which these services can be obtained. Advertising, on the other hand, emphasizes the beneficial aspects of a particular service with the aim of attracting custom. The provision of information is an admirable aim. It is difficult to see how advertising could improve patient care.

E.J.M.

Congratulations

The College congratulates the following members and fellows who have been awarded fellowships of other royal colleges: Professor Ian McWhinney and Drs Michael Morell and Ian Gregg have been awarded the FRCP (London); Dr M.B. Clyne has been awarded the FRCPsych.

Association of Palliative Care and Hospice Doctors of Great Britain and Ireland

An association has been formed for those doctors involved in palliative care. Further information about its activities may be obtained from Dr Richard Hillier, the Secretary of the Association, Consultant Physician, Countess Mountbatten House, Moorgreen Hospital, Botley Road, West End, Southampton SO3 3JB.

Health care videos

The Northampton Health Authority Video Unit is a section of the Northampton Department of Community Medicine. The unit produces videos on health related topics for many groups of health care workers, including consultants, general practitioners, nurses and all professions allied to medicine. The areas covered include alcoholism, developmental screening, exercise, eating habits, smoking and stress. A complete list of titles and details of how to hire the videos may be obtained from Anne Bentley, Northampton Video Unit, Department of Community Medicine Video Communications Services, 39 Billing Road, Northampton NN1 5BB; telephone 0604-37853.

Study packs from the Open University

The Department of Health and Social Welfare of the Open University has produced a number of study courses to assist the training of those working in the caring professions. Some of the courses which may be of interest to the primary care team are *Abuse in families*, *Caring for older people*, *A systematic approach to nursing care*, *Rehabilitation of disabled people* and *The handicapped person in the community*. A new short course which has just been released is *Caring for children and young people*, and other courses in production are *Mental handicap: patterns for living* and *Coronary heart disease: reducing the risk*.

The courses are available both for use by individuals studying on their own and by groups and involve a variety of study materials — books, cassettes and videos.

Further information about these courses may be obtained from the Department of Health and Social Welfare, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA; telephone 0908-653743.