

## OVERSEAS NEWS

### THE AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

*Annals of General Practice*, Volume V, Part 2. (December 1960); Published by the Australian College of General Practitioners.

The Australian College continues to thrive. Recently it organized a five-day convention at Melbourne and 400 doctors attended. The annual general meeting of the College was held during the convention, and its academic section was addressed by Dr K. M. Foster, vice-chairman of the British College Council, who spoke about great general practitioners of the past.

After commenting on these meetings, the editor of *Annals of General Practice* poses the question, "What is the essence of general practice? How can this essence be distilled, concentrated, and supplied for the next generation coming on to take our place?" The excellent articles which he then publishes partly answer him. Some of these cover knowledge in a particular field and are of the high standard which has been set in previous issues of *Annals*. Subjects include "Varicose Veins and Leg Ulcers", "Rehabilitation", and "Safe Anaesthesia". Dr W. A. Conolly's address to an audience of newly-qualified doctors is printed, and, as first President of the Australian College, he lays down with authority some of the personal requirements of family doctors—humility, kindness, patience, tolerance, generosity, honesty of purpose, and respect for human beings. His talk is packed with good advice.

An interesting report by Dr R. Penington describes impressions of the National Health Service in Great Britain in 1959, as seen by an Australian visitor. He thinks there is too much political control of medicine, and a lack of incentive to good work in general practice. He attributes the weakness of the medical profession to its disunity, severely criticizes the lack of liaison between hospital and family doctor, and notes such things as the extraordinary time taken to procure instruments by requisition through official channels. Dr Penington concludes that the Australian system is far superior. In Britain, he writes, the doctor-patient relationship still enjoyed in Australia seems to have disappeared.

Another controversial article begins, "It is doubtful if general practice should continue. Groups of specialists may well take the place of the general practitioner." Thus writes Dr P. S. Clarke of Hobart. He goes on to ask what is the function of general practice, and argues that the College should make its criteria such that a doctor must pass an academic examination, of M.B., B.S. standard, at intervals of ten years. This would show that he was not letting his academic knowledge degenerate. Dr Clarke also advises that

members of the College should observe a self-denying ordinance of not working for money for more than 40 hours a week, and he thinks there is a place for selection by personality tests of entrants to general practice.

One article peculiar to the Australian scene is about the need for local colleagues to keep an eye on each other's standards so as to grant or withdraw operating privileges in hospitals. On medical records as a criterion of excellent practice, the following standard is suggested: "Is the case apparently well managed, and could another physician carry on from the chart without detriment to the patient?"

One feature of *Annals* which must commend itself to many is the insertion of nine loose-leaf reprints of review articles on a variety of subjects, so that the reader can build up for himself a reference book; and there are also nine distinctively tinted pamphlets on drugs. Similar inserts are published with each number of the journal.

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