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Editorial Office: 14 Princes Gate,
London SW7 1PU (Tel: 0171-581 3232,
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E-mail: Journal@rcgp.org.uk
Internet home page:
<http://www.rcgp.org.uk>

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Research papers this month

Practice Professional Development Plans

The Chief Medical Officer has presented a report proposing a change in GPs' education towards a 'Practice Professional Development Plan' to replace the present system of a financial allowance earned by attending educational activity. The aim of Pitts *et al*'s study was to observe the opinions of a group of GPs attending a course which introduced and considered this educational initiative. The authors conclude that this proposal was seen as an improvement to the existing PGEA system; however, to maintain enthusiasm, a successful introduction will depend on the issues of support and resources.

Sex differences in cardiovascular disease

Vogels *et al* note that cardiovascular disease (CVD) is still portrayed as a typically male disease, and men are often submitted to more invasive procedures or referred earlier. To explore sex differences in morbidity and referral patterns in CVD and the role of age and socioeconomic status, data were obtained from a continuous morbidity registration project in the Netherlands. The results show that, for women, low socioeconomic status was associated with relatively higher morbidity of angina pectoris and myocardial infarction than for men. The authors also found that women are less likely to be referred than men are, in particular for angina pectoris.

Research capacity in UK primary care

Moves towards a primary care-led NHS and towards evidence-based care have focused attention upon the need for evaluative research relating to the structure, delivery, and outcome of primary health care in the UK. Using funding data, Campbell *et al* aimed to describe the extent and nature of current research capacity and to identify future needs and priorities. The authors conclude that there is a significant mismatch between the declared policy objective of primary care-led NHS and the research capacity and infrastructure required to respond to this initiative; that, compared with secondary care, there is a paucity of research capacity in primary care; and that, within primary care, there exist major differences in stages of research development between disciplines.

The WOMB antenatal satisfaction questionnaire

Smith notes that antenatal services continue to change, and that women's views should be an important component of assessing the quality of such services. In order to determine women's views, a multidimensional satisfaction questionnaire was developed using psychometric methods and sent to midwives to give to pregnant women in their final trimester. The results show that, after analysis, the women's dimension scores were significantly related to age, parity, social class, and best education achievement. The author concludes that this multidimensional satisfaction instrument has good face, content, and construct validity, and excellent internal reliability.

Stopping drug treatment of hypertension

Of the many reports published describing the effect of withdrawing antihypertensive medication from patients who have well-controlled blood pressure, none have been major British general practice studies. In this paper, Aylett *et al* used a longitudinal observational study to determine the proportion of hypertensive patients who could have their medication withdrawn without relapse, and to seek factors associated with success at withdrawal. The results show that one-fifth of well-controlled hypertensives could have their medication withdrawn without suffering a relapse or any harm; however, life-long observation of all patients is essential.

Are child health surveillance reviews just routine examinations of normal children?

Hampshire *et al* note that the value of child health surveillance (CHS) continues to be questioned, and that the personal child health record (PCHR) has provided a new means of collecting data. The aim of their study was to identify what problems are recorded at CHS reviews in the PCHR during the first year of life, and what follow-up/referrals result directly from these reviews. The results confirm that CHS provides important opportunities to discuss problems that may cause parental concern and to identify children requiring treatment or follow-up; however, the authors conclude that the design and use of the PCHR needs to change to reflect increasing emphasis on health promotion.

COLLEGE CLOSURE

Please note that, for the Christmas period, Princes Gate will close at 1 pm on Friday 24th December and will not re-open until Tuesday 4th January 2000.

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