

of operational research into general practice, and the organization of courses for postgraduate, continued education. We have high expectations of our institute, and it is our hope that it will constitute an important help in the development of the art and science of general practice in the Netherlands.

DISCUSSION

Dr A. C. Arthur (*Stoke-on-Trent*): I understand that certification for insurance purposes is taken completely out of the hands of the general practitioner in Holland and carried out by a separate organization. Could Dr Huygen kindly enlighten us on how this system works?

Dr Huygen: Certification is done by a third doctor. It is forbidden to us as general practitioners and also as specialists to give certificates to patients whom we treat. We are very glad about this. I think it is much better for the relations between doctors that somebody else who is not treating the patients should be appointed to give certificates. I think it is very satisfactory.

Question: How does this work?

Dr Huygen: When someone is ill and in bed, he has to inform his employer, and his employer will inform the organization, which has to send someone to deal with the matter. They will send either a layman to deal with the situation or, if it is quite clear that it is necessary, a doctor will go. But in cases of doubt they will send a doctor. Then the organization which pays the benefits will send the doctor to examine the patient and see if it is necessary to pay or not. This doctor will also be the one to tell the patient, "I think you can resume work now". But his doctor can ask for the opinion of a panel doctor; and we can make a plea for our patients.

Question: Recruitment to general practice is very difficult nowadays in many countries. How is it in Holland?

Dr Huygen: At the moment we do not know the position exactly, but it is estimated that less than a quarter of the medical students wish to go into general practice. I think it is the same in your country. In the first years most students wish to go into general practice and to be a doctor, but when you ask students in the last year you find that most of them wish to become specialists.