

Of group research by questionnaire he says, "this kind of research may be particularly valuable in epidemiology but there are certain limitations to be remembered; the questions must be brief, minimum in number, unequivocal in sense: the answers given should be complete and accurate and unbiased."

He makes a survey of those subjects most suitable for general practitioner research and points out some of the existing obstacles to research which could be removed by administration and other means. Of the incentives, the ideal "is active co-operation between medical practitioners either individually or in the group, and the College of General Practitioners. Through an organisation of this kind the general practitioner is no longer isolated and his knowledge survives his own experiences."

We have quoted enough to show what importance Professor Mackintosh attaches to the College as a stimulation towards research. The whole lecture is a valuable addition to the literature of its subject and is worthy of the attention of all those interested. The bibliography at the end is useful.

REFERENCE

Mackintosh, James M.—*Research in General Practice. The Royal College of Physicians, Edin., 1955. Price 3s. 6d.*

Correspondence

Classification of Minor Maladies

SIR,—I was most interested in your editorial note, in the February Bulletin, on nosology in medicine. As you say, a nosology based on morbid anatomy or pathology has little value in general practice. A classification by aetiology would be best, but we are still a long way from knowing enough about aetiology to make this practical.

One aspect of this theme which has interested me is the recognition and handling of stress disorder in practice. Provisional lists of stress disorders have this one feature in common, that the disorders accompany emotional tension, so that in terms of aetiology they belong to a single category. The disorder mentioned in your note 'fibrositis' is (I believe) the name often given to tension pain, and the pain is easier to understand and to manage if its origin in stress is recognised.

I feel quite strongly that the traditional classification in our medical textbooks is out of date, and I entirely agree with your call for clear thinking. There are many sides to the nosology question, and it would be most interesting if the College would put together a symposium on the subject.

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