Research

STUDY OF SOME OF THE MEDICAL AND OCCUPATIONAL FACTORS INVOLVED IN RETIREMENT

Note by the General Register Office

1. Statistics derived from National Insurance certificates show that, of the men aged 64 (the year before reaching pensionable age) who are off sick, ten per cent have been so for at least three months. Coupled with the fact that ill-health is known to play a part in at least one-half of all retirements from work, it is obvious that, even in the early reaches of old age, chronic and partially-disabling illness is a serious problem. We know very little which particular illnesses are responsible or how to alleviate or prevent them because of the complex interaction of medical and social causes of disease in old age. In any enquiry into medico-social problems the general practitioner is uniquely placed to provide information and we are hoping, with your co-operation, to throw some light on at least one aspect of the conditions and needs of old age.

2. The College, the Ministry of Health and the General Register Office have been considering an enquiry into the fitness for work of men around retiring age and what we have in mind, very broadly, is a special investigation into the medical conditions of a sample of men aged 55—74 in perhaps a hundred practices. The enquiry will be designed to study the causes of ill-health around the age of retirement in relation to occupation. It will mean a fairly extensive medical examination of the selected men and the completion of a detailed questionary on occupation and fitness for work. Each investigation will necessarily take some time, probably half-an-hour or more. The number of investigations to be carried out by each practitioner will be limited to about 25, to be made as and when convenient over a period of about six months.

3. As a second part of the enquiry, a follow-up of some of the men (possibly about one-third) by means of a periodic review will be considered.

4. One important point is that we should require the investigations to be carried out on a representative sample of the men in each practice, i.e. including healthy men who have no reason to consult you. This would mean the co-operation of your patients and the need to explain to them the purpose of the enquiry.

5. The burden of sickness borne by old people is a major challenge to the medical profession and we should like to know whether you would be prepared to help in this attempt to add to the knowledge of some of the medical and occupational factors involved. An experimental questionary has been drawn up and, if you are interested, a copy will be sent to you with further details.

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RESEARCH PROJECTS

Tubal Spasm in Subfertility

An investigation has been started into the role of tubal spasm in the aetiology of human subfertility. It is based on the unconfirmed observation that, in the apparently sterile, conception not infrequently follows adoption; and on the assumption that this could be explained in terms of the relief of prolonged tubal spasm by virtue of the removal of its cause—emotional tension. The investigation is being carried out partly in hospital and partly in general practice. Members are invited to take part in this study, and those wishing to do so are requested to apply to:

Dr J. K. Paterson, Upton, Huntingdonshire.

Puerperal Depression

Its therapy and relationship to normal puerperal emotional changes

It is proposed to investigate the prophylactic treatment of puerperal depression with crude liver extract, and to study the normal emotional changes which take place in the first six weeks following delivery. In a pilot study of ninety cases there was an incidence of depression of 6.6 per cent in untreated cases and there were no depressive episodes in those treated.

Would those interested please communicate with:

Dr T. D. S. Oswald, " Sycamore," 57 Fernhill Road, Cove, Hampshire.

Bell's Palsy

The Northern Home Counties faculty wish to obtain further information on the natural history of Bell's palsy. Members seeing new cases are asked to notify:

Dr Melotte, 33 Queen's Way, Hanworth, Middlesex.

NOTICES

The Editor regrets that there have not been enough requests to justify the binding and indexing of the *Research Newsletter.*

The College Research Fund

The Chairman of the Research Committee wishes to acknowledge the receipt of a generous donation of £25 to the College Research Fund.