

Editorial

The decision to circulate Newsletter No. 7 to all members and associates of the College was taken by the Council while the newsletter was in the press. It was therefore not possible to explain to the recipients the history of the publication and how it was that they had not previously received it. From correspondence addressed to the Editor, it appears that there has been concern on the part of some members that the newsletter had failed to reach them in the past.

It will be recalled that in the early days of the College, a notice was published in the *British Medical Journal* and the *Lancet*, asking those members and associates who were interested in research to submit their names to the chairman of the research committee, stating the subjects in which they were particularly interested. Thus started the Research Register which, from these small beginnings and without any further general invitation, has grown to contain some 450 names. It is one of the primary functions of the register to link those with similar interests. So that each member of the research register should know what other members shared his particular interests, it was necessary that the list be circulated to all, and that supplements be added from time to time.

The research committee quickly seized this opportunity to keep those on the register informed of developments in the research activities of the College. The first newsletter was a single foolscap sheet of duplicating paper; subsequent numbers grew in bulk until the burden of publication warranted the setting up of an Editorial Board. Newsletter No. 5 was the first to be published by this board, but it remained a duplicated document of about forty quarto pages. It still maintained its confidential nature and was primarily intended for circulation amongst members of the research register.

The College has been fortunate in obtaining from the Editors of the *Practitioner* not only friendly encouragement but also material help and the offer of substantial space in their journal, and those parts of the newsletters which were suitable for wider publication have been reprinted in the *Practitioner*.

When the time arrived for the publication of Newsletter No. 6, the research register had grown to such a size that the cost of printing exceeded by very little the cost of duplication, and this newsletter was the first to appear in print. The cost of circulating the newsletter to all members and associates is heavy and in order to meet this extra cost, we have offered space to advertisers. We are grateful for the support received from them and hope that in

time the newsletter may develop into a useful and attractive journal.

Throughout, our aim has been to provide a newsletter through which practising doctors might make contact with others sharing their ideas and ideals; and to show how much original work is being produced from general practice—and we ourselves have been surprised to find how much excellent work is being done. We are able to offer space to all members and associates of the College for the publication of their work and are willing to accept original articles of sufficiently high quality to merit publication; almost more important, we give space for clinical notes of a high standard. The great German pathologist Virchow was once criticised for publishing in his famous journal "*Archiv für Pathologische Anatomie*" articles which were somewhat below the standard that might be expected. He answered his critics as follows:—

“In my journal everybody has the right to make a fool of himself!” That may be a fair enough attitude, but the College has set out with the avowed object of raising the status of general practitioners and the pages of the newsletter will be jealously watched by all who are interested in medical practice today.

ASSOCIATES

The new criteria for membership approved at the second Annual General Meeting of the College has had the effect, as was expected, of making membership more difficult to obtain: this is as it should be, and the College at the same time decided that all practitioners interested in general practice should be entitled to associate themselves with the work of the College.

It is possible that the high standard required of candidates for membership will cause the total number of members to fall during the next few years. Should this happen, the College will look more and more to an active body of associates to prosecute its aims and objects.

In some quarters there has been misunderstanding as to the privileges of associates. Associates are entitled to partake in all the activities of the College and except that they cannot vote at a general meeting, they may exercise this right in supporting, guiding and helping the College to maintain its position in the world of medicine. From the earliest days of the Research Register associates have been admitted with full privileges and many have given invaluable help within our research organisation.

Associateship is not confined to the junior practitioner, nor does it imply an obligation to proceed to membership, though it is hoped that many will do so.