

discussion within and outside the medical profession. Such papers shall be described as papers of the board of science and education of the BMA and shall, subject to the agreement of the council to their publication, contain a prefatory statement as follows: 'The council of the association has agreed that this paper of its board of science and education should be published as a discussion paper for both the medical profession and the general public. In doing so, the council wishes to make it clear that this paper does not necessarily reflect BMA policy.'

Guidelines for child abuse case conferences

At the end of 1986 the committee on doctors and social work hosted a meeting to consider guidelines for case conference procedures. Representatives of the British Association of Social Workers, the Association of County Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, and the Association of Directors of Social Services were present. The local authority associations had said that if the medical profession adopted the guidelines they would support their implementation.

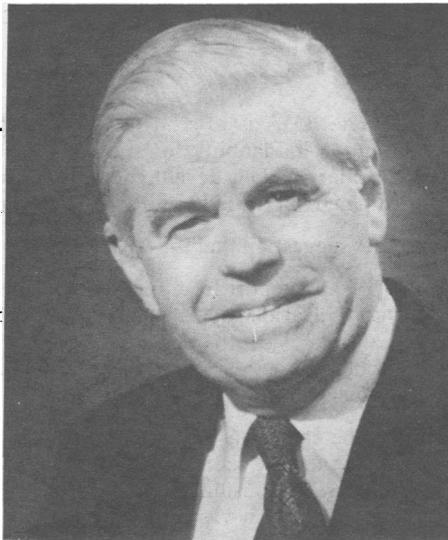
The chairman of the committee, Dr Arnold Elliott, said that the guidelines emphasised the need for interagency cooperation, which had often been lacking in the past. The legal responsibility lay with the local authorities but it was essential for doctors to participate. If necessary conferences could be held in general practitioners' surgeries. The guidance said that it was essential, if doctors were to attend case conferences, that confidentiality of information given at such gatherings should be safeguarded. There needed to be local agreement between health authorities and local authorities on how the differing views on confidentiality and freedom of information were to be reconciled in respect of a multidisciplinary forum such as a case conference.

The council decided that the standing committees should look at the guidelines before they were given final approval.

Teaching forensic medicine

The General Medical Council is to be urged to acknowledge the need for compulsory training in forensic medicine in the undergraduate curriculum.

The 1986 annual representative meeting and the Junior Members Forum adopted resolutions criticising the inadequacy of forensic medicine training and the forensic medicine subcommittee of the private practice committee had prepared a report on the subject. The report stated that training at undergraduate level required the continued appointment of suitably qualified lecturers, which in turn depended on the provision of postgraduate training. Postgraduate training was also necessary for the increasingly specialised work of doctors assisting police authorities; this would be the subject of a future report. Until 1963 the General Medical Council required all medical students to take and pass a paper in forensic medicine. It was no longer compulsory and fewer and fewer medical schools offered any teaching in the subject. Lecturers in forensic medicine were relatively expensive, since their skills were regularly called for by the courts, and the Home Office had been reluctant to implement the Brodrick



The representative body will be asked to endorse a recommendation that Sir David Innes Williams should be elected president of the BMA for 1988-9. Sir David is chairman of the council of the Imperial Cancer Fund and consultant urologist at the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street.

committee's recommendation that the Home Office should contribute to the funding of forensic medicine departments.

The private practice committee believed that a directive that the undergraduate curriculum must include forensic medicine would be the most effective step to reverse the decline. Doctors graduating before 1963 had been amazed that the courses were no longer compulsory; those qualifying in the past 12 years had identified the need for them.

Charles Hastings Wine Club to continue

The 1986 annual representative meeting resolved "that the present close relationship between the BMA and the Charles Hastings Wine Club be reviewed." A working party was set up, chaired by Dr E B Lewis, and last week the council approved its recommendations:

"That the continued existence of the Charles Hastings Wine Club be approved, but that its aims and relationship with the BMA be modified to take into account more fully the association's policy on alcohol.

"That the terms of reference of the organisation committee be amended with a view to giving it a greater degree of control over the Charles Hastings Wine Club committee and activities.

"That subject to these recommendations being adopted membership of the Charles Hastings Wine Club should continue to be offered as a benefit of BMA membership.

"That a mechanism be established whereby it can be ascertained that the benefits offered by agencies such as the Charles Hastings Wine Club are available only to current BMA members."

Euthanasia working party

In October the council agreed to set up a working party to study euthanasia. This will be

chaired by Sir Henry Yellowlees and will have the following terms of reference:

"To examine (a) the ethical problems relating to euthanasia, terminal illness and suicide; (b) the United Kingdom law relating to suicide and homicide; (c) guidance and instructions given by different religions; (d) the present theoretical position in the UK as stated in the *Handbook of Medical Ethics*; (e) the current practice and trends in euthanasia in other countries; (f) codes that have been developed by other national and international medical associations; and (g) trends in public opinion in the UK."

Distinguished Service Award

The council has approved the introduction of a Distinguished Service Award for non-medical personnel who have given distinguished, outstanding, or exceptional services to the association. The first recipient will be Mr Charles Butcher, formerly senior partner of Messrs Hempsons, the BMA's solicitors.

Future nominations for the award will be made to the secretary, the editor of the *BMJ*, or the chairman of the awards and honours committee, and the award will consist of a scroll accompanied by a suitable lapel badge or brooch.

Liberal proposals for NHS pay

The Liberal party has suggested a complete reform of the National Health Service pay structure to make it less complex and able to make more use of its resources. The party's health panel calls on an Alliance government to set up a comparabilities study to assess how much pay in the NHS needs to catch up with rewards in comparable jobs outside and to make sure that the gap does not widen. The panel says that the pay structure should be simplified with a move towards common conditions of service for all or most staff groups and the progressive grouping of all NHS grades into several pay bands. There should be additional funds to bargain for changes in pay structure and working practices that would release further resources to improve pay rates.

The publication says that the long established review body on doctors' and dentists' remuneration has been effective in maintaining the relative position of doctors and dentists. The comparative position of other NHS staff was less satisfactory and would be more difficult to correct. "Having regard to the magnitude of the changes needed in the NHS pay structure," the panel says, "there is no urgent need for altering the doctors' and dentists' review body to be on the agenda."

Fair Pay for NHS Staff is available (£1 plus 20p postage and packing) from Liberal Party Publications, The Birchcliffe Centre, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire HX7 8DG.

Correction

BMA council election 1987-8

In the report of the BMA council election results 1987-8 (3 January, p 70) the total participation of senior hospital doctors should have read 39%, not 49%.