

## NEWS AND NOTES

## Views

Minerva's record for slides is 54 electronmicrographs in a 15-minute talk; the lecture was also given in français, but fortunately by a charming, well-dressed girl, who drove all criticism from the assembled males' minds. This may be an extreme example, but most slides are poorly made and have too much detail—and their users show too many. *A Guide to Better Slides* by Erik Sandoe and Jens Andersen gives the rules: no more than eight slides in 10 minutes; graphics rather than text or tables; a maximum of six words in the title, seven lines, and seven words per line (and four columns if a table has to be used); and 5-7 wedges in a pie chart. Minerva promises to stay awake while any slides using these rules are shown; this splendid booklet is free to members of the European Society of Cardiology.

*"Any who have heard that sound will shrink at the recollection of it; it is the sound of the English county families baying for broken glass." An overused quotation, perhaps, but we surely need another Evelyn Waugh to describe the nauseating spectacle of the press and television hounds in full cry after infertile women who desperately want the chance of having a baby, in privacy. Whatever became of the so-called codes between the media and the profession discussed after Ian Aird had separated the Siamese twins and Donald Ross performed the first British heart transplant?*

Not all drug companies pay their debt to society by channeling some surplus funds into altruistic foundations, so Minerva welcomed the launching of Merck Sharp & Dohme's new venture last week. The MSD Foundation will be catering for the needs of trainers of general practitioners; initially, they will concentrate on chronic disease (diabetes first, probably using tapes and slides) and on consultation (probably in the form of tapes and films). Karl Sabbagh, the director of the new foundation, is an old hand at communication (he is moving from BBC television) and should be invaluable in suggesting new techniques for the latter project. Pilot programmes will be tried out with the help of an evaluator and the regional advisers, and everything will be free except the cost of cassette tapes. The chairman of the steering committee, Professor Pat Byrne, remarked "charity begins at home," so they won't be branching out into the Common Market just yet.

*In his foreword to "Progress in Sexology" (Plenum, \$39) Richard Green remarks that the Second International Congress of Sexology signalled the emergence at an international level of sexology as science—a chilling thought, particularly as it also signals some complicated jargon. Minerva was attracted by some of the chapter headings, however, and wondered what to make of "Sexual dimorphism in erotic function," "Androgen insensitivity syndrome," "Sexual behaviour in elderly Danish males," and "Prostitution as an ecology of confidence games" (not to mention "Certification of sex therapists"). Must the language of science talk about masturbation as "environmentally-coded male," American men as having "unconsciously exercised a kind of reductivism in human eroticism," and more interesting, "we have found it useful to have some clients participate in a weekend sexual attitude reassessment program"? Anyway, the editors Robert Gemme and Connie Christine Wheeler must have had fun putting it all together.*

Even the decorous *New England Journal of Medicine* has now

discovered sex, and the findings of a Pittsburgh psychiatric department (1978, 299, 111) have inspired Minerva to tell her spouse some home truths. In a self-reported questionnaire 100 well-educated, prosperous, and happily married couples disclosed a high frequency of sexual complaints: 48 women had difficulty in reaching orgasm, and 15 never achieved this, while 51 men had dysfunctions of ejaculation or erection. Characteristically, husbands and wives agreed about the frequency of the husbands' difficulties but men tended to underestimate their wives' problems—an underestimation that "seems consistent with the typical American pattern of sexual interaction in which as long as the wife neither complains nor refuses to have intercourse, the husband assumes that all is well."

*At a protest meeting held to oppose the downgrading of a hospital in south-east London a demonstrator is reported to have said, "It's such a friendly hospital. Even the consultants and doctors are friendly with everyone." Minerva is a bit surprised at the distinction and saddened to learn that normally both groups are thought to be such an unfriendly lot.*

A young woman developed a neuropathy affecting the arms and legs (*Neurology*, 1978, 28, 485). She had been in the habit of inhaling nitrous oxide from up to 72 small cartridges used in a commercial whipped cream dispenser. When analysed the gas was found to contain a number of volatile compounds, mainly thought to have come from the rubber seal of the dispenser, including phenol, trichloroethylene, and toluene, which are known to be neurotoxic. The habit is said to be increasingly popular in America and more cases are expected.

*When Minerva met a Washington health educator on a plane from Athens recently she told him, with a touch of one-upmanship, that Britain's more enlightened schools now include in their syllabus an eight-lecture course in health education. She was somewhat abashed, therefore, to hear that every child in Washington has to attend 180 hours of such talks during his schooldays. Perhaps that explains why American children sometimes ask for carrots instead of biscuits.*

It isn't only pilots of aircraft and trapeze artists who are liable to get retinal haemorrhages from the effects of negative g. A 9-year-old girl was found to have diminished visual acuity and preretinal haemorrhages on a routine examination (*Journal of Pediatrics*, 1978, 92, 846), and it turned out that she spent periods of up to 15 minutes doing backswings on the school parallel bars. When she had been advised to stop, the haemorrhages disappeared. Measurements of the acceleration force in this manoeuvre gave a surprisingly high figure of nearly -6 g.

*As a sun worshipper Minerva was delighted to learn that sunlight may not after all be the chief cause of lip cancer. A Finnish study ("British Journal of Cancer," 1978, 37, 483) shows a decreased incidence since 1953, not just as a result of urban living. Cancer was most common in northern and eastern Finland, and the suggested causes include outdoor occupation (but some factor other than sunlight) combined with smoking or a dietary factor, or both.*

MINERVA

*(Minerva is just about to go away for her holiday, but will be back again in a week or two.)*

## MEDICAL NEWS

### New provost

Professor H L Duthie has been appointed provost of the Welsh National School of



Medicine to succeed Provost J P D Mounsey, who will retire in 1979. Professor Duthie graduated from Glasgow University in 1952 and became a fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh in 1956 and of the Royal College of Surgeons of England in 1957. Glas-

gow University awarded him the ChM in 1959 and the MD in 1962. He held academic appointments in Glasgow, Rochester, Minnesota, and Leeds, and has been professor and head of the department of surgery at Sheffield University since 1964, being dean of medicine 1973-6. Professor Duthie has been a member of several national and international bodies, including the GMC, the Specialist Advisory Committee in General Surgery, and the Association of Professors of Surgery, of which he is a past chairman. He is chairman of the International Steering Committee for the International Symposia on Gastrointestinal Motility and has recently been elected president of the Surgical Research Society.

### Adverse reactions

In 1977 11 255 suspected adverse reactions to drugs were notified to the Committee on Safety of Medicines, almost double the number reported in 1976. This figure comes from the committee's annual report for 1977 (published with the *Annual Report for 1977* of the Medicines Commission), which reflects "the increase in tempo of the committee's work on adverse reactions." During 1977 the committee issued proposals on postmarketing surveillance of drugs; published a new seven-volume edition of the *Register of Adverse Reactions*; and issued adverse reactions leaflets on neomycin and deafness, perhexiline maleate, and hormonal pregnancy tests and congenital abnormalities. The committee has also been considering cases of alleged vaccine damage caused by pertussis vaccine. This work is continuing, but the report warns that even when the study is completed it may be difficult to draw any firm conclusions about the degree of risk of neurological damage from pertussis vaccine.

### Health Education Council

With a larger budget than ever before, the Health Education Council was able in 1978 to launch its first major campaign aimed at promoting good health through personal choice of a better life style. The council's annual report for 1977-8 describes the good response that the council has had from health authorities, commercial organisations, and the public to its "Look after Yourself" campaign.

This is the first stage of a long-term venture to create attitudes that may lead to a change in behaviour. Sir George Godber, chairman of the council, writing in the foreword to the report, points out, however, that despite the extra funds allocated to the better health campaign for future years resources will be drained from the council's other work if further support is not provided. In 1977-8 this other work included continued anti-smoking efforts; campaigns to educate the public about sensible drinking, immunisation, hypothermia, contraception, and head lice; support for health authority health education staff and schoolteachers; and grants for two short Open University courses for parents.

### Royal College of Pathologists

At its meeting on 18 July the council of the college announced the election of the following officers, whose appointment will run from mid-November 1978: Professor J R Anderson, president; Professor R C Curran, Dr B C Morson, Dr A A Sharp, vice presidents; Professor J R Tighe, registrar; Professor F V Flynn, treasurer; Professor Rosalinde Hurley, assistant registrar.

### People in the news

Professor Albert Latner has been granted the title of professor emeritus in the department of clinical biochemistry, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, from 1 October on his retirement.

Professor Sune Bergström has been awarded the Gold Medal in Therapeutics of the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London in recognition of his outstanding work on the isolation, structure, and action of prostaglandins.

Dr John L Reid has been appointed regius professor of materia medica at Glasgow University.

Professor J M Evanson, professor of medicine, has been appointed dean of the medical school at Manchester University from 1 January 1980.

Dr J W Black, FRS, now director of therapeutic research at Wellcome Research Laboratories, is to receive the Royal Society Mulla Award for 1978 in recognition of his major contributions to the discovery and development of  $\beta$ -adrenoceptor blocking drugs and histamine  $H_2$ -receptor blockers.

Dr A G H Blakely has been appointed professor of applied physiology at Leicester University from 1 April 1979.

Dr F S W Brimblecombe, consultant paediatrician at the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital, has been appointed honorary professor of child health in the Postgraduate Medical Institute of Exeter University.

### COMING EVENTS

**Association of Health Care Information and Medical Records Officers**—Conference "Health information and patient care," 7 October, Perth. Details from P A Hill, Lothian Health Board, 79 Lauriston Place, Edinburgh EH3 9HY. (Tel 031-229 2477 ext 2722.)

**Pittsburgh Conference on Analytical Chemistry and Applied Spectroscopy**—5-9 March, Cleveland, Ohio. Details from the Pittsburgh Conference on Analytical Chemistry and Applied Spectroscopy, Suite 215, Whitehall Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15227, USA.

**ELSE**—4th General Assembly of the European Life Science Editors on "International Co-operation in

### Instructions to authors

The following are the minimum requirements for manuscripts submitted for publication.

(1) **Typing** should be on one side of the paper, with double or triple spacing between the lines and 5-cm margins at the top and left-hand side of the sheet.

(2) **Two copies** (or preferably three) should be submitted.

(3) **Spelling** should conform to that of *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary*.

(4) **References** must be set out in the style used in the *BMJ*, and their accuracy verified before the manuscript is submitted.

(5) **SI units** are used for scientific measurements. In the text they should be followed by traditional units in parentheses. In tables and illustrations values are given only in SI units, but a conversion factor must be supplied. For general guidance on the International System of Units, and some useful conversion factors, see *The SI for the Health Professions* (WHO, 1977).

(6) **Authors** should give their names and initials, their current appointments, and not more than two degrees or diplomas. Each author must sign the covering letter as evidence of consent to publication.

(7) **Acknowledgments** will not be sent unless a stamped addressed envelope or an international reply coupon is enclosed.

(8) **Detailed instructions** are given in the *BMJ* dated 7 January (p 6).

Scientific Publishing," 18-20 April 1979 at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest. Cost about \$160 (exclusive of travelling to and from Budapest). Details from Miss N Morris, Secretary, ELSE, Bruins, Langdown Road, Lower Bourne, Farnham, Surrey.

**International Union Against Cancer**—Copies of the calendar of international meetings on cancer are available from the Union, Conseil-General 3, 1205 Geneva, Switzerland. (Telex 289724.)

### UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

#### LONDON

MD—C M Castleden, P G Goodwin, N I Ramus, H H Wynter. MS—P M Atkinson.

#### LIVERPOOL

*Promotions*—Dr C S Smith (senior lecturer in child health); Dr R Knight (senior lecturer in tropical medicine).

### CONSULTANT APPOINTMENTS

**GREATER GLASGOW HEALTH BOARD**—Dr R E Day (developmental paediatrics and neurological handicap); Dr T Fyfe (physician); Mr G R Gray (surgeon); Dr D H Kennedy (infectious diseases).

**NORTHERN RHA**—Dr A B A Karat, Dr C Thomson, Dr M B McIlmurray, Dr Susan H Roberts (general medicine); Mrs Sakimata Karat, Mr S Mukherjee (orthopaedic surgery); Mr A J Warrington, Mr I M Rogers (general surgery); Dr R Goodwin (anaesthetics); Dr Mary M P McElroy (radiology).

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