

NEWS AND NOTES

Views

Yet again surgeons in the United States are racing to climb on to a fashionable bandwagon—the operation of adrenal to brain transplantation for Parkinson's disease (*Journal of the American Medical Association* 1987;258:881-2). The success in two patients reported from Mexico earlier this year (in contrast to failure from similar attempts in Sweden) has led neurosurgeons in at least five centres in the United States to begin operating. None of the reports mention any trial protocol or audit procedure; the state of the art approach seems to be before and after videos of the individual patients. Meanwhile in Mexico two of the first 11 patients treated have died. . . .

Another medical context where fashion plays a dominant part is diet—and all too often the fashionable hype crosses the Atlantic quicker than the criticism. "Annals of Internal Medicine" (1987;107:101-3) is asking a lot of questions about a diet marketed by "United Sciences of America, Incorporated" as not only effective in lowering weight but also in preventing degenerative diseases. Yet again, apparently, the public has been persuaded into believing that swallowing something expensive will improve health. The reality that people do not want to accept is that the key to health lies in not swallowing many of the foods and drinks they like.

A typically efficient Swedish prospective study over 18.5 years of 789 men aged 54 at recruitment showed that 57 had strokes (*New England Journal of Medicine* 1987;317:521-6). The usual risk factors were identified—hypertension, increased waist circumference, etc—but in addition men whose mothers had died of stroke had a threefold increase in their own incidence of stroke. A paternal history of death from stroke had no apparent effect.

And another careful long term study from Sweden—reported in the "British Journal of Psychiatry" (1987;151:382-8)—looked at the outcome over 20 years in 55 men with alcohol dependence who were well adjusted socially. At follow up 11 were abstainers, 11 reported a change to social drinking via abstinence, and 10 had gradually become social drinkers. Improvement after the age of 45 was mainly due to a gradual change in social drinking—attributable often to decreased tolerance to alcohol. The conclusion is that the prognosis for the middle aged alcoholic who has managed to maintain good social adjustment is better than might be expected.

Britons depressed by reports of Japanese and Dutch children showing improvement on IQ testing when compared with previous generations may take comfort: the same secular trend has been found in children in Leeds, Newcastle, Birmingham, Suffolk, Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire, and Sussex (*Nature* 1987;328:797). Tests on 1029 children aged 9 to 11 showed that when compared with children tested in 1936 the average score was 2.48 points higher. The underlying cause remains unknown.

Doctors who doubt the feasibility or advantages of patients looking after their own case notes should read an account in the "British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology" (1987;94:612-9) of a controlled trial in

an obstetric clinic in Newbury. Women who held their own records found it easier to talk to doctors and midwives and felt in control of their antenatal care. The small number of women (4%) who forgot to bring their notes to the clinic was balanced by an equal number of failures by the medical records department. And, of course, there was a saving in clerical time.

The great pioneer of physical treatments for mental illness, Dr William Sargent, has never been afraid to speak out; asked in a recent interview (*Bulletin of the Royal College of Psychiatrists* 1987;11:290-4) about psychiatry today he criticised the trend towards just talking to patients. "If you tackle psychiatry as a medical illness then you get somewhere," he warned. "But to go back and just use 'talking treatment' is going to mean that psychiatry's going to be a long time putting itself right again."

Sports injuries seem to be big business in the United States, with 17 million people damaging themselves each year and surgeons charging fees of, for example, \$15 000 for repair of a torn anterior cruciate ligament of the knee. The National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases is trying to encourage more research into sports injuries—but, according to "Science" (1987;237:846-7) most of the surgeons who treat these patients are "not accustomed to designing experiments and writing grant proposals."

Those who can remember the puzzlement and excitement provoked by the discovery in 1960 of the Philadelphia chromosome may like to know that the story is close to its conclusion (*British Journal of Haematology* 1987;66:435-6). The abnormal appearance of chromosome 9 in patients with chronic myeloid leukaemia is due to translocation from chromosome 9 to chromosome 22 of the proto-oncogene *c-abl*, which is homologous with the viral oncogene *v-abl* found in a murine leukaemia virus. Almost certainly, therefore, the change in the appearance of the Philadelphia chromosome is a marker of the crucial mutation in a stem cell that leads to proliferation of the oncogene and so to leukaemia.

The North London Blood Transfusion Centre at Edgware is seeking urgently to expand its pool of regular blood donors to keep pace with the voracious demands of the hospitals it supplies in the North West Thames Region and Highbury, Islington, and Bloomsbury districts. At a recent visit to the centre Minerva was told of the excellent donor records of many of the large London based companies, but one notable exception was BMA House—apparently well known for its low per caput contributions. The next donor session is imminent. Does it really need an Olympic directive to get the house to roll up its sleeves?

Between 1982 and 1986 the number of medical students being trained in the United States fell from 66 886 to 66 142, while the number of full time medical teachers rose from 55 527 to 63 991 (*Journal of the American Medical Association* 1987;258:1013-20). The proportion of women among applicants to medical schools in 1986-7 was 36%; women accounted for 33.4% of the total number of students enrolled (as against 8.3% in 1966-7).

MINERVA

MEDICAL NEWS

BMA to take action on defence society subs

Concerned at the 87% increase in defence society subscriptions proposed for 1988 (29 August, p 560) the BMA has decided to seek an urgent meeting with Department of Health officials. The association is particularly concerned at the effect of the sharp increase on doctors in the training grades and although concessionary rates are offered to doctors in the first six years after qualification, the full subscription of £1080 equals one month's salary for a registrar. The BMA thinks this latest increase may dissuade many junior doctors from pursuing a career in hospital medicine. (Hospital doctors may claim part of the subscription against tax; general practitioners include the total sum in their practice expenses.) The Hospital Junior Staff Committee will discuss the matter on 28 September and may ask for direct reimbursement of the subscription or for liability to be assumed by the employing authority—as happens in the United States.

On 30 September the BMA council will consider a recommendation that a parliamentary select committee should be asked to inquire into the increasing damages awarded by the courts for victims of medical accidents or negligence. These high awards have caused the subscriptions to rise and, the BMA believes, will lead to more defensive medicine. The secretary of the BMA, Dr John Havard, told a press conference last week that in some cases doctors will be reluctant to carry out certain procedures, in others they will feel obliged to carry out unnecessary and costly ones.

Finally, the BMA's review body evidence committee will be asked to take account of the increases when submitting evidence to the review body on doctors' and dentists' remuneration.

British Olympic Medical Centre

HRH The Princess Royal, president of the British Olympic Association, opened the new British Olympic Medical Centre at Northwick Park Hospital, Harrow, last week. The centre, the first of its kind in Britain, will provide medical screening, an injury and treatment service, a referral service, and a laboratory for testing fitness.

It will also offer advice on training, diet, and travel.

Medical centres devoted solely to the needs of sportsmen and sportswomen are commonplace in many other countries. The centre is regarded as a major step forward for Britain's olympic competitors.

Medical miles and marathons

Action for Research into Multiple Sclerosis is organising charity runs (the Westminster Mile) to be held on 20 September. There will be four runs for the public and two for professional athletes. If enough medical and dental personnel take part there are plans next year for a Medical Mile, which, it is hoped, will become an annual event. The entry fee is £2.00; interested doctors can apply for further details from Dr Arrif Lalani, 12a Durham Road, Raynes Park, London SW20 0TW.

There are plans for an international marathon, half marathon, and 10 kilometre run in Holland on 2 September 1989 for medical and paramedical runners. It will be held in conjunction with a medical conference. Further details are available from Dr D S Tunstall Pedoe, medical director, London Sports Medicine Institute, Medical College of St Bartholomew's Hospital, Charterhouse Square, London EC1M 6BQ.

Cigarette advertising in disguise

Televised sport attracts peak audiences of 5 million in Britain, many of whom are children: in 1985, 40% of British children aged 7-15 watched the finals of one snooker championship. In 1986 the BBC broadcast 362 hours of sport sponsored by the tobacco industry. In one snooker event sponsored by Benson and Hedges camera shots showing tobacco name boards amounted to 383 seconds per hour, or the equivalent of four advertisements worth £260 000. (It has been illegal to advertise cigarettes on television since 1965.)

The latest report from Project Smoke Free *The Name of the Game*, submitted to the Health Education Authority, shows that stricter controls and voluntary agreements have not worked. Inconsistencies remain in BBC policy. Sponsors' names

are sometimes included, sometimes excluded from credits, news bulletins, and publications. Despite the fact that the *Radio Times* does not accept any form of cigarette advertising, pictures of sporting events clearly showing the logos of tobacco companies are sometimes published.

The report makes several recommendations, principally that the number of sporting events sponsored by tobacco companies and broadcast by the BBC should be reduced and completely phased out by 1990.

The report also recommends that stricter editorial controls should be exercised on the broadcasting of international events with no colour coding of sets, dress, or equipment; visual and verbal "name penetration" should be monitored and restricted to less than 30 seconds per hour of live coverage; all sponsored broadcasts should be preceded or followed by formal public health warnings; players should not smoke while on camera; and there should be no broadcasting of events sponsored by the tobacco industry which feature juveniles. (In May of this year an under 11 year old rugby league competition was broadcast clearly showing its sponsorship by Gallahers.)

Sir Brian Bailey, chairman of the Health Education Authority, endorsed the call to phase out tobacco sponsored events on television by 1990. "We are sure that the BBC, having proved that it is well aware of the issues, will take steps to bring this disguised cigarette advertising to an end," he said.

Need for improvement in Scottish child care law?

There is to be a wide ranging review of child care law in Scotland with a view to simplifying and improving the present arrangements for protecting children at risk and caring for children and families in need. The review, which has been set up by the Secretary of State for Scotland, aims at reporting within two years. At March 1986 there were 13 319 children in care or under supervision in Scotland, an increase of 58 over the previous year. Seventy seven per cent of the children were living in the community and 25% had been in care for five years or more.

New MIND leaflets

The MIND leaflet, *Understanding Mental Illness*, is now available in Bengali and Cantonese. Other leaflets on mental handicap, schizophrenia, and manic depression produced for sufferers, their friends, and relatives have been substantially rewritten and redesigned. They are available 25p each, £2 for 10, or £18 for 100 from MIND Mail Order, 4th Floor, 24-32 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2HD.

Different theophyllines

Sustained release, oral theophylline preparations vary in their release mechanisms and dissolution rates and so far no generic preparation has been licensed. The council of the Pharmaceutical Society recommends that once patients have been stabilised on a particular brand they should continue to receive the same product. Pharmacists have been advised to contact general practitioners who do not specify the brand name on their prescription and agree on the brand to be dis-



HRH The Princess Royal talking to Mr John Smith, chairman of the Sports Council, at the opening of the British Olympic Medical Centre at Northwick Park Hospital.

pensed. To ensure that patients discharged from hospital are maintained on the brand on which they were stabilised, senior pharmacists should confirm that it is notified to a discharged patient's general practitioner.

Award for research into liver disease

The Falk-Foundation of Freiburg, West Germany, is to give a \$25 000 award, the Hans Popper award, for achievements in research into liver diseases. The prize, which will be awarded for the first time in October 1989 and thereafter every three years, is intended to recognise outstanding contributions to clinical and experimental hepatology by scientists aged under 50. More information from Dr Herbert Falk, Falk-Foundation EV, Habsburgerstraße 81, D-7800 Freiburg, West Germany.

British Heart Foundation awards

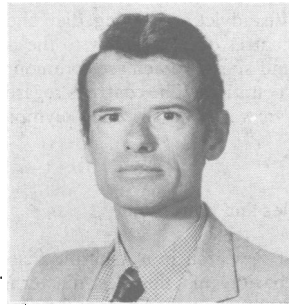
The British Heart Foundation fellowships committee has awarded six fellowships and four PhD studentships, totalling £208 925, to researchers in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, and London.

The most important award was an overseas visiting fellowship, worth £26 210, to Professor Marek Malik, of Charles University, Prague, Czechoslovakia, who will work with Professor John Camm for a year at St George's Hospital Medical School in London. Professor Malik is to study the recovery of the heart muscle after a heart attack.

People in the news

Dr John Templeman Whicher, consultant chemical pathologist with the Bristol and Weston Health Authority, has been appointed professor of chemical pathology at the University of Leeds. Dr Whicher has carried out research into the

mechanism of inflammation—especially the proteins of biological fluids and the acute phase response.



Dr John Templeman Whicher.

Dr Maurice Slevin has succeeded Dr Vicky Clement-Jones, who died on 30 July, as chairman of the British Association of Cancer United Patients (BACUP). He was previously the association's deputy chairman.

Ms Nicola Low of University College Hospital, London, has won first prize in a medical essay competition sponsored by St Ivel Gold, which had as its subject *Dietary Fat: Calories and Coronaries?*

Mr David Wickstead of Liverpool University received second prize, and Mr Martin Cowie of Aberdeen University received third prize.

Film festival

The first International Science, Technology, and Medical Film and Television Festival will be held in Bristol on 8-13 October at the Watershed Media Centre. Festival objectives are that programmes should be aimed at the general public; they will be assessed on the extent to which they advance public understanding of their subject

matter. Some of the films shortlisted from the 150 entries are on deafness, Huntington's chorea, Swedish medicine, cervical cancer, and patterns of inheritance.

Free public viewings will be given during the week, courtesy of British Gas, which along with the Royal Society, the Committee on the Public Understanding of Science, the BBC, and Channel Four is sponsoring the festival.

Glasgow programme for advanced cancer care

A nucleus of doctors and nurses trained in advanced cancer care is one of the aims of a five year programme at Glasgow University. Funded with £315 000 from the Cancer Relief Macmillan Fund the other aims are to provide courses, seminars, and in service learning programmes and to develop an advisory support team at the Victoria Infirmary. An honorary consultant, a nursing fellow, and a training fellow will be appointed as part of the scheme, which is one of 11 that the fund is financing, having committed more than £4 million to improve education in the care of patients with cancer.

Recent publications

AIDS Diagnosis and Control: current situation (report of meeting held in Munich, March 1987), World Health Organisation, available through HMSO.

Entrapment in Road Traffic Accidents British Association for Immediate Care, The Administrator, BASICS, 31c Lower Brook Street, Ipswich IP4 1AQ, price £1.95 (including postage and packing).

Preconception Care (proceedings of a symposium at City University, London) Wyeth Department of Postgraduate Education, Huntercombe Lane South, Taplow SL6 0PH, price £1.50.

COMING EVENTS

Quekett Microscopical Club—Annual exhibition and conversation, 10 October, London. Details from Mr H S Henderson, 6 Farringford Close, Chiswell, St Albans, Herts AL2 3HZ. Please send SAE.

"Human T cell lymphotropic virus and its epidemiological implications"—Meeting sponsored by the Department of Health and Social Security, Public Health Laboratory Service of England and Wales, and the British Blood Transfusion Society, 15 October, London. Details from Dr Philippa White, Virus Reference Laboratory, 61 Colindale Avenue, London NW9 5HT.

"Chemical nomenclature into the next millennium: has it a role?"—International symposium organised by the Laboratory of the Government Chemist and the Royal Society of Chemistry, 12-13 November, London. Details from symposium organiser at the laboratory, Room A104, Cornwall House, Waterloo Road, London SE1 8XY. (Tel 01 211 8599.)

Royal Statistical Society—Meeting on "AIDS," 25 November, London. Details from the society, 25 Enford Street, London W1H 2BH.

National Organisation for Widows, Widowers, and Their Children—International conference on grief and bereavement in contemporary society, 12-15 July 1988, London. Details from Cruse, Cruse House, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1UR.

Birmingham Medical Institute—Details and copies of the programme of meetings of the institute and sections are available from the institute, 36 Harborne Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 3AF. (Tel 021 454 5007.)

Clinical Research Centre—Details and copies of the programme of Northwick Park lectures in clinical science to June 1988 are available from the director's secretary at the centre, Watford Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 3UJ. Details of individual lectures will be given in our Societies and Lectures column.

Edinburgh Postgraduate Board for Medicine—Details and copies of the programme of courses for 1987-8 are available from the board, Pfizer Foundation, Hill Square, Edinburgh EH8 9DR. (Tel 031 667 1011 ext 4521-3.)

School of Continuing Education, University of Kent—Details and copies of the programme of health service courses are available from the school, Rutherford College, University of Kent, Canterbury, Kent CT2 7NX. (Tel 0227 764000 ext 7663.)

Winchester Medical and Dental Federation—Details and copies of the programme of meetings to December are available from the Postgraduate Medical Centre, Royal Hampshire County Hospital, Winchester, Hampshire. (Tel Winchester 824422.)

SOCIETIES AND LECTURES

For attending lectures marked * a fee is charged or a ticket is required. Applications should be made first to the institutions concerned.

Wednesday 16 September

QUEEN CHARLOTTE'S MATERNITY HOSPITAL—At Pathology Lecture Theatre, Institute of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, 12 30 pm, paediatric seminar, Dr H A Curtis: Teenage intercourse, uninformed, unplanned, and regretted.

ROYAL POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL SCHOOL—At Stamp Lecture Theatre, 10 15 am, medical staff round.

Thursday 17 September

ILFORD POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL CENTRE—8 pm, Richard Smith memorial lecture by Dr John Horder: Whither general practice? * (Preceded by buffet supper 7 15 pm. *)

Friday 18 September

BROMPTON HOSPITAL MEDICAL UNIT STAFF ROUND—At Lecture Theatre, Cardiothoracic Institute, 8 am, Dr Stephen Spiro: Current ideas on chemotherapy of lung cancer. (Coffee and rolls available at 7 45 am.)

BMA NOTICES

Division meetings

Members proposing to attend meetings marked * are asked to notify in advance the honorary secretary concerned.

Bury—At Postgraduate Centre, Bury General Hospital, Wednesday 16 September, 8 30 pm, joint meeting with the North West British Small Animals Veterinary Association, Mr J Madeley "Testing feline leukaemia virus," Dr Onions "Feline leukaemia

virus," and Dr E Curless, "Update on AIDS." * (Preceded by meal. * Spouses invited.)

Croydon—At Postgraduate Medical Centre, Mayday Hospital, Tuesday 15 September, 7 30 pm, buffet supper followed by report of arm and business meeting.

Doncaster—At Board Room, Doncaster Royal Infirmary, Wednesday 16 September, 8 15 pm, special general meeting, speaker Mr Norman Ellis: "Developments in the NHS."

Lewisham—At Hayes Dining Club, London Bridge Hospital, Thursday 17 September, 7 30 pm, chairman's reception. *

Mid Downs—At Committee Room, Crawley Hospital, Thursday 17 September, 7 pm, inaugural meeting, buffet supper, business meeting, and talk by Mrs Pamela Taylor: "Parliamentary lobbying."

Rochdale—At Bateman Centre, Birch Hill Hospital, Monday 14 September, 8 pm, agm.

Southend on Sea—At 45 Tyrone Road, Thorpe Bay, Saturday 12 September, 7 45 for 8 pm, chairman's reception. * At Lansdowne Country Club, Wednesday 16 September, 8 30 pm, divisional meeting. (Preceded by meal 7 30 pm. *)

Tower Hamlets—At John Ellis Lecture Theatre, London Hospital, Tuesday 15 September, 7 30 pm, meeting to discuss programme of meetings, and to revitalise division. (Preceded by buffet 7 pm.)

Trafford—At Chez Suzanne, Altrincham, Wednesday 16 September, 7 30 pm, dinner meeting. *

Wolverhampton—At Mount Hotel, Friday 18 September, 7 30 for 8 pm, annual medicolegal dinner, speaker Dame Josephine Barnes: "In vitro fertilisation." * (Guests invited.)

Regional meetings

North East Thames Regional Committee for Community Medicine & Community Health—At BMA House, Monday 14 September, 5 30 pm.

North West Thames Regional Committee for Hospital Medical Services—At BMA House, Monday 14 September, 5 30 pm.

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