**MEDICAL NEWS**

**Nation's health**

A falling birthrate, smaller families, and fewer abortions are the main trends seen in the vital statistics analysed by Sir Henry Yulewells in his CMO's report for 1974, *On the State of the Public Health* (HMSO price £2.85). The birth rate for the year of 13,1000 was an unprecedentedly low level, says the report, adding that "amongst recently married couples there is evidence of a conscious desire to postpone starting a family and spaces their children." However, the perinatal and infant mortality rates in Britain were still behind many of our European neighbours: lower perinatal mortality was recorded by Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, East Germany, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Rumania, Sweden, and Switzerland.

**Resignation honour**

Sir Joseph E Stone has made a life peer in Sir Harold Wilson's resignation honours list. He was created a knight bachelor in the dissolution honours list in 1970. Sir Joseph, who has graduated from London University in 1927, is a general practitioner in North London.

**Mental hospital statistics**

Admissions to mental hospitals have risen progressively in the last decade, according to the DHSS publication *Psychiatric Hospitals and Units in England—Inpatient statistics from the Mental Health Enquiry for the year 1973* (HMSO price £2.95). The 1973 figure of 175,000 was 20,000 up on that in 1964. First admissions have shown a recent slight fall, while readmissions have continued to rise. The proportion of patients admitted to psychiatric units in general hospitals has risen, and now accounts for 23% of admissions.

Alcoholism shows the most marked upward trend among the diagnostic categories—the increase has averaged 12.5% a year—compensated by a decline in admissions for psychoneurosis.

**Inquiry into Prescription Pricing Authority seeks evidence**

An independent inquiry is being arranged into the functions, constitution, and organisation of the Prescription Pricing Authority. This inquiry was prompted, says the DHSS, by recent delays in payments to chemists and dispensing doctors.

Mr R J Tricker, director of the Oxford Centre for Management Studies, will conduct the inquiry assisted by Mr J Charlton, nominated by the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee, and Dr W G A Riddle, nominated by the British Medical Association. The inquiry would welcome the views of individuals who wish to submit evidence, which should be sent by 16 July to the secretary, Inquiry into the Prescription Pricing Authority, Room 923, Hannover House, Elephant and Castle, London SE1.

**COMING EVENTS**

- **International Hospital Equipment and Health Services Exhibition—Conference and exhibition, 14-17 June, Birmingham.** Details from Contemporary Exhibitions Ltd, 21 Park Square East, Regent's Park, London NW1 4LH. (Tel 01-935 8235/8271/8200).

**Xth Symposium of the International Union of School and University Health and Medicine—20 June-1 July, Manchester.** Details from the Conference Secretary, University of Manchester, University Student Health Service, Manchester M13 9QS. (Tel 061-273 6371-3).

**SOCIETIES AND LECTURES**

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

- **Monday, 7 June**
  - **Institute of Dermatology—4.30 pm, Mr R C G Russell:** Some surgical aspects of skin disease—2 Surgical management of melanomas, squamous epitheliomas, basal cell carcinomas, etc.

**Correction**

**Constraints of pay policies**

In the leading article "Constraints of pay policies" (22 May, p 1239) the fourth and fifth references should be: *British Medical Journal*, 1976, 1, 135; and *British Medical Journal*, 1975, 1, 4. We apologise for these errors.

**Notice to authors**

When original articles and letters for publication are not submitted exclusively to the *British Medical Journal* this must be stated. For detailed instructions to authors see page 6 of the issue dated 3 January 1976.

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