

research appointment with the Medical Research Council and starting a new professional life as a general practitioner, while keeping my tutorial commitments at St Peter's College, Oxford...

From its very start the job imposed certain guidelines: one had to be aware of the fragility of human contact, to be available, clear, natural, conscious of the manipulative possibilities of situations...

The receptionist's role has therefore become crucial—the first to see the patient, and her responsibilities were not dictated by bureaucratic guidelines but by her capacity to understand the patient's story...

One may well ask what we have to show for our efforts. One answer can be given by the attendance figures. In under four years we have seen over 2000 patients and carried out over 7000 consultations...

Research has been carried out by an evaluation team comprising the district community physician, a lecturer in sociology at Birkbeck College, London, and the administrator at Great Chapel Street Medical Centre...

It may be relevant to summarise the lessons that I have learned from my association with the Great Chapel Street Medical Centre.

- (1) The most important is that the personalities of the staff and their inner resources are what, in the end, count most. It is no coincidence that the members of my own surgery staff are both former patients of the centre.

(2) Given that this is so, the role of administrators, receptionists, students, nurses, and doctors need no longer be subject to the constraints of orthodoxy.

(3) The welfare of the homeless who are ill has demonstrated the need for a sick bay for patients who require care but who are not ill enough to be admitted to hospital.

(4) The constraints of dealing with homeless people have prompted us to be intolerant of trendy jargon and of vague aspirations.

God guard me from those thoughts men think He that sings a lasting song Thinks in a marrow bone.

"Audit" has been much in the air lately. If by that unfortunate term is meant an awareness and an acceptance of responsibility for one's choices...

Pathology of Partnerships

You're never here... I'm never there

GEMINI

You're never here...

The major causes of interpartnership strife are money and work load. Time, it is said, is money, and this is certainly true in general practice. Our senior partner is never here so we got him to analyse his diary for 1981 to find out what he does all the time...

This man receives 30% of the profits of a four-man practice. How can this be?

Of course it did not happen suddenly. Over the years partners in the practice have taken time off for professional activities outside the practice such as clinical assistantships. The practice has always recognised the value of such posts since they have brought new experience, knowledge, and skills to enrich the partnership.

This entitlement is clearly set out in the partnership agreement. Because of the senior partner's commitment to his academic appointment he is also allowed a maximum of 100 days out of the practice per year in addition to his six weeks leave...

activities outside the practice. The work that he does not do during this time is of course divided among the other three partners who receive part of the £13 000 extra income in proportion to their partnership shares.

Interestingly our academic partner's advice was sought by a disgruntled member of another practice who was aggrieved that his practice had suggested he paid into the practice the fees resulting from his growing amount of writing.

The other aspect of such absence—its effect on continuity of care and the guilt the doctor feels is another story...

I'm never there

The trouble with me is I'm never there! Like an increasing number of general practitioners I have a part-time job that keeps me away from the practice. Some of us work in the hospital but in a way that is rather different from those of us who are not doing a purely clinical task outside but are teaching or doing research or administrative or organisational tasks, or maybe a combination of all three.

I have partners who rarely complain about me—least not openly. They readily accept the need for someone to do the other jobs and, provided it is arranged, they don't mind us doing work that they are not being adequately paid for, there are no complaints.

There are two major problems that I have run up against: the first is the sheer difficulties of organisation. The time scales in the running my two jobs are quite different. My work in the practice requires continuity of care and some predictability which I just don't seem to be able to provide.

My solution to the problem is to share the care of some patients with one of my partners. It is made easy by having partners whose clinical judgment can be trusted and knowing that why I have always placed that first on my list of desirable attributes for a new partner.

meticulously. Important points cannot be trusted to memory but must be written down, and it is often helpful to jot down the next steps you thought of taking. For example, "See again in one week; if no better full blood count and chest x-ray" at least gives your other half an indication of the way you are thinking.

Interesting GPs of the Past

William Price of Llantrisant—1800-1893

JOHN CULE

My father used to tell me that when he was a boy he had often seen Dr William Price, dressed in his red and green suit, dazzling brass buttons, and a fowlskin hat reminiscent of Davy Crockett, walking along the streets of the old market town of Pontypridd.

Dr William Price was among the first to emerge after his competence in managing his affairs. This entailed examination for the surprising purpose of showing that he was not composed merely at the relevant time. Necropsy examination revealed that the blood vessels of the brain were very large, and it was solemnly suggested that his desire to immerse himself in water, was in order to relieve their throbbing.

Young William was the fifth born of the seven children of the Reverend William Price, sometime fellow of Jesus College, Oxford, who resigned his fellowship on abandoning his celibacy and marrying Mary Edmunds of Machen, an illiterate maid-servant.

Wales National School of Medicine, Cardiff CP4 6KN JOHN CULE, MD, MRCGP, lecturer in the history of medicine

message that the waiting room was full for my surgery 40 miles away. Not my fault this time, thank heavens.

If I somehow manage to deal with the organisational problems of having two jobs I find the second problem insoluble.

Conscience is not, for me, a hard task-master—it is an intolerable one. To a part-timer in two (or is it three?) jobs the full-timer always seems better at any one. I suppose that each job contributes vicariously to the other ones and makes one better, but it is a message I cannot readily absorb and it accounts for many a restless night. It is not helped by some of my peers who feel anxious to counter every proposal by saying, "That's all right for you, but I'm sure you're a great practitioner."

Among the eccentricities of the father was a great predilection for water. One of his greatest enjoyments was to immerse himself in the pond up to his neck. Sometimes he would take off his clothes before going in to the water. But before he put them on again he would be sure to dip them in the pond to make them fresh.

After the Rev William's death a dispute arose about his competence in managing his affairs. This entailed examination for the surprising purpose of showing that he was not composed merely at the relevant time. Necropsy examination revealed that the blood vessels of the brain were very large, and it was solemnly suggested that his desire to immerse himself in water, was in order to relieve their throbbing.

Many of the stories are apocryphal. Such as the one that Dr Price had grafted a calf's bone to repair a collar's compound fracture. "Did you know that Dr Price once cured a patient's stomach ache by making him vomit into a bucket and taking a live frog out of it?"

There were comensome diagnoses and cures concerning patients suffering from overindulgence in food and drink. They were told that their troubles were due to "consumption."

Wales National School of Medicine, Cardiff CP4 6KN JOHN CULE, MD, MRCGP, lecturer in the history of medicine



Dr William Price in his suit of scarlet merino wool with green silk lettering. This photograph appears as the frontispiece of his extraordinary Gwyltill yn Noyd, published in 1871: this is Proisian Welsh for The Will of My Father. It is written throughout in the curious spelling that Price detested as old Welsh. In one hand he holds a staff with the crescent moon, and he is described as cawlben y baird, and in the other the mudduwr, "hat, or emblem of immortality."

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from Llantrisant he always walked and never took those short cuts which wasted time by climbing over styles, as he preferred "to keep up a steady pace."

He was known to visit whenever possible during the hours of darkness, his theory being that patients felt at their worst during the night and therefore needed more attention than during the daytime. For a similar reason Dr Price had no watch, which he said was not needed as the time to see patients was when they sent for you.

There is simply no space to recount the many episodes that filled his long life. We shall have to content with the dramatic climax that was to lead to his trial that established the legality of cremation, though nothing was farther from his mind when on that Sunday evening of 13 January 1884 the people of Llantrisant saw the fire leaping on Caerlan Hill.

The case of Regina v Price was heard at the Glamorganshire Winter Assizes of 1884 before Mr Justice Stephen. The legal points decided by the trial were: "To burn a dead body instead of burying it is not a misdemeanour unless it is so done as to amount to a public nuisance," and "If an inquest ought to be held on a dead body, it is a misdemeanour so to dispose of the body so as to prevent the coroner from holding the inquest."

After a trial in which Price lived up to his name, the editor of The South Wales Daily News commented that although he had been found not guilty, he had been told not to do it again. On 14 March 1884 Price removed the baby's foot from beneath his bed, where it had lain since a day previous after the coroner's inquest, and quietly finished the task of burning less Grise Price with a half ton of coal, a gallon of paraffin oil, and sixpennyworth of wood.

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