

RES MEDICA

Journal of the Royal Medical Society



Editorial

Editor: J.A. Gray

Editorial Committee: F. Cockburn, A.W. Dellipiani, and C.V. Ruckley

Abstract

After 220 years of journalistic infertility, the Royal Medical Society has given birth to *Res Medica* and it is appropriate enough that nearly nine months have elapsed since the end of last Session when the idea was first conceived. Previous attempts to publish the Transactions of the Society have on the whole been abortive, and the idea of a regularly produced Journal never seems to have been seriously entertained.

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The Journal

AFTER 220 YEARS of journalistic infertility, the Royal Medical Society has given birth to *Res Medica* and it is appropriate enough that nearly nine months have elapsed since the end of last Session when the idea was first conceived. Previous attempts to publish the Transactions of the Society have on the whole been abortive, and the idea of a regularly produced Journal never seems to have been seriously entertained.

In January 1779, the eminent Dr Andrew Duncan, a pioneer in psychiatric work and later a President of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, proposed that the Royal Medical Society should exercise its right of publication. Two months afterwards an announcement was made in the *Medical Commentaries* that the first volume of the forthcoming Transactions would contain an article by Dr John Purcell, Professor of Anatomy in Trinity College, Dublin, on the Sigaultian Operation. Early in 1782 a further announcement appeared but subsequently the newly formed Printing Committee went into abeyance and, after a final brief flicker of activity in 1814, it was finally extinguished.

During the eighteenth century again, another attempt was made to give wider recognition to the Minutes and Dissertations of the Society and this time it met with some success. For a period of six hours each Member who so wished was allowed to peruse the documents of which several copies were made at the Society's expense. They were then sent on to the next most senior Member on the list at the appointed time. This clumsy but apparently workable "Circulation of Papers" continued for a number of years.

At the end of last century the idea of publication again came to the fore. In January 1888, Dr E. H. Ezard, Junior President, proposed that an annually elected office of Editor of Transactions be created. This post of *Actorum Redactor* was later abolished in favour of an Editorial Committee of the four Presidents, and in the spring of 1892 there appeared a selection of Dissertations by Members of the Society who had attained eminence in the Profession. The Preface was written by Sir Douglas Maclagan, an *Olim Praeses* who had at one time been a tireless worker for the Society.

It is obvious that since very early days the Society has frequently felt the need and the desirability to expand its audience and include those outside the four walls in which its meetings are held. This, it may be said, is the motivating force behind the introduction of *Res Medica* and indeed its very *raison d'être*. Thousands of pages of manuscript lie dusty and almost forgotten within the bookcases at 7 Melbourne Place, many written by famous practitioners of the Art of Medicine, and it will


be our revered privilege to rediscover them and allow some of the wit and wisdom of the last two centuries to reach the light of day through the medium of the modern printing press. Although it is at present impossible to include more than a fraction of the Society's annual Proceedings, it is hoped that future editions will be augmented both in their material content and in their circulation. A Journal of the Royal Medical Society should be of general interest to students and doctors in the Edinburgh Medical School and for this reason its sale will not be restricted merely to the confines of the Society or to its past Members and Fellows. Moreover, it seems appropriate that the staff of the Faculty of Medicine, to whom all students must inevitably be indebted, should have the opportunity of writing in the Journal and of expressing their views both to graduates and to undergraduates without the intervening medium of the lecturer's bench.

It is therefore a great honour for this first issue to be introduced by the Professor of Medicine, Sir STANLEY DAVIDSON, and his words of understanding and encouragement have a message for all who aspire to or have already entered our Profession. Any student who has doubted the wisdom of his choice of career or who has suffered some setback to his academic progress, will draw courage and determination from reading Sir Stanley's article. Dr MACGREGOR, too, has kindly agreed to share the benefits of his recent experiences in America, a topic better suited to the pages of this Journal than to the formal atmosphere of the lecture theatre.

We in Edinburgh proudly respect and admire the traditions of our Medical School, and it is only right that these should be reflected in the pages of *Res Medica*. At the same time we feel it would be unnecessary to justify the inclusion of foreign material. Although certain social and political groups have a tendency to encircle themselves in an impenetrable barrier of self-righteousness and self-satisfaction, this trait is fortunately not marked in most quarters of our Profession, and we do not intend that it should be in *Res Medica*. One of our aims, therefore, will be to include contributions from men belonging to institutions with a stature equal to our own but whose views we may not necessarily share. The value of such contributions lies not only in their content but in their controversial nature for they stimulate thought and discussion—those very attitudes of mind that any society would be unwise to reject. For this very reason Sir ARTHUR PORRITT'S Inaugural Address for the 221st Session does much to enhance the pages of our first number; surely there are few subjects which will produce more discussion in medical circles than the treatment of mammary carcinoma. In his vote of thanks, Professor JOHN BRUCE pointed out that Sir Arthur's views were not those commonly held in Edinburgh, but he also indicated how welcome they were and how much could be gained from studying them.

Before concluding this somewhat explanatory Editorial, the Committee wishes to acknowledge their sincere gratitude to those who have helped and encouraged them in this venture. Professor BRUCE has made many sympathetic and valuable suggestions and has helped us with advertisements. And last but not least, we thank our Printer, without whose self-sacrificing efforts this Journal would never have become a reality.

It is our hope and trust that *Res Medica* will prove a benefit to our University and will maintain the venerable traditions of The Royal Medical Society in the years that are to come.

 For historical detail we are indebted to James Gray's "History of the Royal Medical Society," published in 1952 by the Edinburgh University Press.