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Review

Abstract

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This showed that 30% of students were 'regular' attenders at extracurricular lectures, societies, symposia, etc., i.e. attended more than twice per term; 30% did not attend any such meetings, the remainder (40%) being 'occasional' attenders. Comparison showed that twice as many students attended Edinburgh Medical Group meetings as R.M.S. meetings; why this should be we could not definitely ascertain, but it is significant that 72% of medical students felt that they were insufficiently informed about R.M.S. activities.

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REVIEW

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In attempting to define the reasons for the Society's small membership over the years, an opportunity was provided for students to voice their criticisms of the Society's affairs, and indicate why they had not joined:

(a) 55% of students suggested that Friday night was unsuitable for meetings, for various reasons; Wednesday stood out from other weekdays as the most suitable alternative.

(b) 40% indicated that they had never been approached with regard to joining; indeed, a surprising number did not know of the existence of the Society!

(c) 33% suggested that the 2 guinea subscription was prohibitive; this was a particular criticism of the 2nd-4th years.

(d) 20% objected to the 'formality' of the Society's proceedings, though very few took the opportunity to elaborate on any particular aspects of this; furthermore, 50% of these had not been to any meetings, and so could not authoritatively comment on this point.

(e) 28% felt there was no feeling of welcome in the Society.

(f) 27% thought the Society's business too similar to the medical school curriculum.

Finally, 42% of students said that they would join the R.M.S. if changes were made along the lines suggested; 11% said they would not join, the remainder being undecided.

In view of the above figures, but bearing in mind the history and essential traditions of the Society, it seems reasonable that the Society's membership could be at least doubled (to 20% of the medical school) if public relations were improved and some meetings held on Wednesdays; and with better publicity and more imaginative topics, larger audiences could be assured at Public meetings.

Action is being taken on these lines, and there are already very promising signs of substantial improvement in membership and attendances.

● Maintaining a neutral attitude to Professor Christian Barnard is beset with the same difficulties as watching a Rangers-Celtic match without taking sides. Professor Barnard's address to the Society, which filled the George Square lecture theatre to capacity, was a victory for his supporters, and I suspect won over a few of his critics as well. His technique is not so much one of initially breaking the ice with his audience, as of causing complete liquefaction, using his charm as a catalyst and poetry and anecdote as his stage-props.

After a justification of heart transplantation, with an admission that the first operation was something of a step into the unknown, as all medical advances are to a greater or lesser degree, the real meat of the talk followed. Here we were told about the techniques employed

in replacing the recipient's heart muscle with that of the donor and the methods used for maintaining the circulation during this manoeuvre. Professor Barnard then discussed the rejection phenomena, the way in which this had been combated with a combination of Azathioprine, prednisone and A.L.G. and the extensive search that the South African team had made for a reliable indication that rejection was taking place.

A few photographs of recipients and of the hospital at Cape Town followed by one last poem, revived the men from Grampian, who had seemed a little bemused by all the technical jargon and saw Barnard bowing out to rapturous applause. And if one questioner did have the audacity to suggest that the Professor's experiments in heart transplantation with dogs had not met with 100% success, the audience were in no mood to swallow their angustura after the feast.

● Starting the 232nd. session with the chains of tradition falling from all parts of its body, the Society can be excused if at its first meeting it acted a little like a cat with two tails. The lady presidents were showered with bouquets and professor Perry, by combining his Inaugural Address with his dissertation to the Society earned himself a tankard of beer. The owner of the femur, which is still punished twice nightly under the hand of the Senior President, would no doubt be proud that the bone which served him (or was it her) for so long, is still in use. Perhaps the person who pinched the silver gavel will, even yet, one day return it.

Professor Perry in his address on "Trends in Medical Education", placed himself more in the camp of the radicals than the conservatives in this field, although he recognised the necessity for compromise. His lucid explanation

of the rationale behind the way in which the present Edinburgh medical course was constructed makes it easier for the student to accept those aspects of it which at first sight appear incongruous. The compromise in this case, it was explained, is a resolution of the need to provide the scientifically trained professional man and the immediate doctor. Perhaps the first of us through the mill will be more tolerant of teaching troubles and Professor Perry's admission that the ideal has not yet been fully achieved, helps us to realise that much thought is still being given to the problem.

Let us hope that from his new job with the University of the Air, he will find time to return to Edinburgh. He will certainly not be soon forgotten.

SYLLABUS FOR THE SPRING TERM

January

- 10 Address: Professor Henry Millar, "Headache" (in Surgeon's Hall).
- 20 Talk: Dr. Ian Oswald, to be announced.

February

- 14 Address: Dr. C. A. St. Hill, "Suspicious Deaths".

March

- 5 Annual Extraordinary General Meeting.
- 7 President's Valedictory Address.

Member's Dissertations will be announced during the term and Business Meetings will be announced weekly.

The honorary editorial board and Miss Harkins and Mrs. Thompson once more deserve undying gratitude. We thank them again for their help and advice which they are always willing to provide.

OFFICE-BEARERS FOR THE 232nd SESSION

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Senior President | R. D. HUNTER, B.Sc.(Hons.) |
| 1st Junior President | J. B. IRVING, B.Sc.(Hons.) |
| 2nd Junior President | Miss J. M. DUNCAN |
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