Acne

Acne is the commonest of all skin diseases. It is a disease of adolescence and is associated with excessive production of androgens in relation to oestrogens. It is related to the physiological transition of the skin to the adult stage, and is occasionally associated with emotional maladjustment. Hot water and liquid soap followed by the use of a sulphur lotion is good treatment. Small doses of oestrogens can safely be given to both sexes. In some cases small doses of thyroid are useful. Unless acne is treated early, permanent scarring may result and this, particularly in the case of young girls, sometimes has unfortunate psychological consequences.

Sufferers from acne must have sufficient exercise, sufficient recreation and suitable social interests. They must be assured that acne can be cured. Suitable friendships with members of the opposite sex are more effective than pills and lotions.

It is essential that young people have a suitable diet. Protein and vitamin intake must be sufficient and the consumption of fat and carbohydrate can with advantage be reduced, but diet will not cause or cure acne.

The general practitioner must know and understand his patients. He must be guide, philosopher and friend, know their secrets, share their joys and understand their problems. This is his duty and his privilege. Having the confidence of his patients, the family doctor can solve problems in personal relationships. He can assist in removing tensions and anxieties which play such an important part in the aetiology of skin diseases.

**'HIPPOCRATIC OATH' AT CAPE TOWN**

The 2300-years-old Hippocratic Oath is the prototype of many oaths and declarations to which medical practitioners have been required to subscribe on admission to the medical profession in various parts of the world in ancient and modern times. Medical graduates are today commonly called on to subscribe to an oath or declaration by their respective universities before admission to their qualifying degree.

The University of Cape Town prescribes a declaration of this kind which it has hitherto been the practice for the M.B., Ch.B. graduates to make in an informal manner before the Principal and Registrar at the university office. This year, at the instance of the Medical Students' Council, the University held a more formal ceremony in the Medical School, Observatory, Cape Town. This took place on 12 December 1957, when Prof. R. W. James, the Vice-Chancellor and Acting Principal presided, supported by the Registrar and the professorial staff of the Faculty of Medicine.

After the Vice-Chancellor and Dr. A. W. S. Sichel had addressed the meeting, the 1957 M.B., Ch.B. graduates affirmed the declaration prescribed by the University and then individually subscribed to the declaration, which is in the following terms:

'I, . . . , solemnly declare that as a graduate in medicine of the University of Cape Town, I will exercise my profession to the best of my knowledge and ability, for the good of all persons whose health may be placed in my care, and for the public weal; that I will hold in due regard the honourable traditions and obligations of the medical profession, and will do nothing inconsistent therewith; and that I will be loyal to the University and endeavour to promote its welfare and maintain its reputation.'

The graduands then voluntarily affirmed the Declaration of Geneva. This declaration, which was adopted by the World Medical Association in 1948, and is regarded as embodying in modern form the spirit of the traditional Hippocratic Oath, is in the following terms:

'At the time of being admitted as a member of the medical profession—I solemnly pledge myself to consecrate my life to the service of humanity:

I will give my teachers the respect and gratitude which is their due;

I will practise my profession with conscience and dignity;

The health of my patient will be my first consideration;

I will respect the secrets which are confided in me;

I will maintain by all the means in my power, the honour and the noble traditions of the medical profession;

I will not permit considerations of religion, nationality, race, party, politics or social standing to intervene between my duty and my patient;

I will maintain the utmost respect for human life, from the time of conception; even under threat, I will not use my medical knowledge contrary to the laws of humanity.

I make these promises solemnly, freely and upon my honour.'

The meeting concluded with an address by Mr. J. Katz, 1957 Final Year Class Representative. The assembly stood during the entrance and retiral of the Vice-Chancellor and his platform supporters.

**DR. SICHEL'S ADDRESS**

Dr. A. W. S. Sichel's address was as follows:

It is a privilege and a pleasure to have been invited to address you on this occasion when, after years' hard labour, you are about to have conferred on you the degree of Batchelor of Medicine and Batchelor of Surgery of the University of Cape Town. It is an occasion which your Acting Principal has described as a solemn one.

Your Medical School was the first to be established in the Union of South Africa and has during the past 40 years built up a prestige and tradition to which you must constantly endeavour to live up. It has a reputation which will bear comparison with any other medical school in the world.

You have still one year of internship to do, a period of further study imposed by the South African Medical and Dental Council for your own good, but particularly in the interests of the public. You will now have an opportunity to put into effect what you have learnt, but under supervision.

When your medical education has been completed you will emerge as fully-qualified doctors, free to think for yourself, and to act and think for yourselves subject to the laws of the land, the code of ethics prescribed by the Medical Council, and the Hippocratic Oath.

**General Practice and Specialization**

Many of you will enter general practice and it is to those of you who do that I address my remarks especially. Once in practice, crammed with book knowledge, you will have to revise or modify much of what you have been taught up to now. You have worked in a well-equipped and well-organized teaching hospital with extensive ancillary services. In practice you will find yourselves deprived of information served to you on a platter. You will have to rely on your own powers of observation and exercise your own judgment. You will work to some extent by trial and error and you will make mistakes. Do not take it amiss if I express the hope that you will make mistakes, for once you have made a mistake, you will never repeat it. Beware of the man who has never made a mistake, remembering that the best man is he who makes the fewest mistakes.

Do not hold exaggerated ideas of your own importance or assess your knowledge too high. Always be humble enough to seek advice from those competent to give it. Never be ashamed of your limitations, and when you get out of your depth try to get assistance. Your greatest asset will be common sense, something that you have not gleaned from text-books.

It may be that some of you already have decided to specialize or will have to come to a decision in the near future. In my opinion specialization today is being overdone, with the result that there is a...
superabundance of young specialists in the large urban areas, which will lead to cut-throat competition in the struggle to make a livelihood. At the same time there are not enough general practitioners in the rural areas, partly owing to the fact that even general practitioners themselves tend to practise in the larger centres where amenities are more pleasant.

A false gap has been created between specialists and general practitioners because of an impression that the status of the general practitioner is lower. As a matter of fact general practice is really a form of specialism and a most difficult one at that.

The Medical Association

As one who has taken a very active part in the affairs of the Medical Association of South Africa I must take this opportunity of doing some propaganda. In practice you will be confronted with many problems and difficulties. Do you wish to be lone wolves forced to fight your own battles as best you can, or will you combine with your colleagues in a concerted effort to attain your objectives and preserve your rights as individuals? There is only one body which exists as an organization to meet the circumstances, the Medical Association of South Africa, and I strongly advise every one of you to join its ranks; and when you become members do not sit back and complain that your membership seems to mean nothing, but take an active part in its affairs.

In conclusion I wish you all good luck, health and happiness in your future career. Let common sense and fair play be your guiding stars and, if you can, leaven them with humour.

CAPE MIDLAND BRANCH

ANNUAL REPORT OF HON. SECRETARY, DR. P. JABKOVITZ

In reviewing the activities of the Branch for 1957 we cannot regard all our results with the satisfaction we should have liked for reasons to which I shall later refer, but we have, nevertheless, had a very strenuous period.

A suitable room has been set aside in the new hospital additions for our library. We have already taken possession and your Library Committee is busy reducing our bank balance rapidly while building up a very popular choice of reading material. They have wisely devoted most of their choice to journals and the shelves have begun to take on a very professional look. We must record our thanks to the Administrator, who has thus made good an old promise.

Your Branch Council has been fully occupied with the general affairs of the Branch, including matters Ethical, Benevolent, and Contract Practice. Our business meetings have dealt with a variety of items including, chiefly, the vexed question of the Honorary System. Our monthly clinical meetings have been held regularly and, where not addressed by distinguished guests, have been well supplied with instructive and interesting material by the members themselves.

Of the meetings addressed by our guest speakers, those of clinical interest proved most popular. Two lectures by Mr. Rodney Smith, one by Prof. A. H. Louw, one by Prof. R. Turner, and one by Dr. D. M. T. Gairdner were very welcome. We were also pleased to entertain Dr. Routley and Dr. Donaldson. Further, I have much pleasure in informing you that I have already arranged the agenda for this year lectures by Professor Janes of Toronto and Mr. R. W. Raven, whom many of you will remember from your London years. There is also the possibility of visits by members of the teaching staff of the Cape Town University.

Two matters have engaged considerable attention and concern in our Branch. The first was the request by the honorary staff of the Livingstone and Provincial Hospitals, Port Elizabeth, for the use of the Association machinery to abolish the honorary system and to negotiate for its replacement by a system of staffing hospitals on a sessional basis.

The Honorary System

In days gone by, the status of an Honorary was sufficient repayment for his labours for the underprivileged. Beds were not difficult to obtain, he had a resident staff who could combine to make an efficient team, his hospital work might even be an introduction to private work. Today he has to battle against ever-increasing competition for beds for his out-patients. The introduction to private work is negligible. And in the Provincial Hospitals, Port Elizabeth, the resident staff simply does not exist; they are unheard of. Interns are being absorbed as in a vortex by the teaching hospitals, where many in lowly positions serve simply round their centre of adoration, afar, like Sputniks, serving some remote function only later to fade silently from human ken.

We must pay tribute to the excellent work of the many general practitioners who have stepped in to do the work of the resident staff; paid as they are, they can well look at their chiefs with a patronizing air. But whether it be they, or the graded practitioners at the Livingstone, the whole aspect of hospital practice has changed and it can only be a matter of time before it is recognized that the honorary system is an anachronism. Only in the remote corner of the world called the Cape, in which it still survives, can it be re-discovered like the Coelocanth.

Our repeated representation for the abolition of the honorary system over the last 2 years to our Head Office has met with little response, except, perhaps, where it has appeared on the agenda of Federal Council, to be rapidly passed over at some stage of a Federal Council meeting when its members were too weary to give the matter the attention it deserved. You will be asked tonight to support a concise resolution to Federal Council which we hope will receive the sympathy and support of the majority on Federal Council and also lead to prompt action.

Livingstone Hospital and Postgraduate Study

The other matter which has occupied our thoughts for a considerable time is the rich undeveloped fields for postgraduate study which lie waste in the Livingstone Hospital. Visitors to this hospital stare amazedly at the figures—12,000 admissions a year; 150,000 out-patient attendances, and 20 babies born each day, with an amazing percentage of obstetric abnormalities. The late Prof. van den Ende was one of the few keen enough to envisage the possibilities. In my correspondence with him he displayed considerable insight into the position. He had already brought the matter before the Joint Provincial and University Committee. We hope that his passing will not end the ideal we have before us, but whether the postgraduate school of the future at the Livingstone will be tied up with the Cape Town University, The College of Physicians and Surgeons, or Rhodes University, all of which have been mooted, no one can at this moment foresee. But of one thing there can be no doubt; whoever will exploit the teaching possibilities will find a wealth of material concentrated in a compact area that will make any effort worth while.

OBITUARY : JOHN DRUMMOND, M.D., F.R.C.P. (Edin.)

We regret to announce the death of Dr. John Drummond, M.D., F.R.C.P. (Edin.), of Durban, which took place from coronary thrombosis on 25 January 1958 at Elgin, Cape, where he was visiting on holiday.

Born in New Zealand Dr. Drummond, who was 73 years old, had practised since 1912 at Durban, where he was held in high regard as a consulting physician. Dr. Drummond was long associated with the Medical Association of South Africa and was President of the South African Medical Congress when it was held in Durban in 1946. The funeral took place in Durban.

An In Memoriam notice will appear in a later issue of the Journal.