

Correspondence

Rheumatism in retrospect

Sir,

As World Rheumatism Year has now closed, it might be of value for the younger supporters, who have always been 'respectable', to learn of our pre-War problems.

When I passed my Membership in 1933, by luck first time, I suddenly realised that I could not have given a reasonable answer to a question on rheumatoid arthritis, although I had at my fingertips details of every obstruse cerebral condition known. I therefore went to my chief, Professor Sir Francis Fraser, and told him I wished to make a part-time study of the rheumatic diseases. His reply was, 'My boy, I have been training you to be a respectable physician at Barts and you now decide to prostitute your soul by associating with every quack in the Universe'. My reply—'How then can Medicine improve?' He then helped me all he could. The only rheumatologist at that time with *any* senior degree was Will Copeman and even he was suspect for his interest and I certainly took a step down the ladder. Horder, the clinician of this century, was the one visionary when he founded the Empire Rheumatism Council, now the Arthritis and Rheumatism Council, in 1936, with Will Copeman as medical secretary and myself about the most junior member. A year later the Heberden Society was conceived by the staff of the Peto Place British Red Cross Society Rheumatology Clinic.

Gradually rheumatology became respectable, helped by the discovery of cortisone by an American rheumatologist,

Phil Hench. Now we have five Chairs and three major specialist research units and every scientist values its importance. But still, under the NHS, though it constitutes a third of the complaints to GPs, it is funded by only 4.5% of the budget.

Physical medicine and rehabilitation had the same difficult beginnings and again Horder sorted it out. The War made rehabilitation important but the Barons of Harley Street (led by Morton Smart and Robert Stanton Woods), the Emergency Medical Service (Frank Cooksey), and Service specialists (Frank Howitt), and other specialists, like Philippe Bauwens, world authority on medical electricity, but uninterested in other problems, were fighting like cats and dogs, till Horder gave a lunch party at Claridges in 1942 and figuratively bumped their heads together. The result was the British Association of Physical Medicine.

When will manipulative medicine be properly brought into the medical curriculum and receive the cloak of respectability? As Horder once wrote, 'It takes a long time for the Princes of Medicine to take Cinderella to the dance', though today they do a little more readily let their eyes rove over the form.

GEORGE KERSLEY

*Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases,
Upper Borough Walls,
Bath BA1 1RL.*

Errata

In the paper 'Alclofenac and D-penicillamine' by H Berry *et al.* (pp. 93–97, February issue), the sentence in the second paragraph of the Discussion, 'It disappeared on stopping the drug but did not recur when the patient was rechallenged' should read 'It disappeared on stopping the drug but recurred when the patient was rechallenged'.

The Second Prague Symposium on Rheumatology—Spinal Column, will be held from June 11th–14th, 1978, *not* July 12th–15th as published in the December issue of the *Annals*, 36, 591.