EDITORIAL
ARMY MEDICAL RESEARCH

The history of the Army Medical Services records a series of important and honoured contributors to past medical research. The eponymously named diseases of brucellosis and leishmaniasis stand out as particular examples where the work of RAMC doctors has played a significant part in the saga of tropical medicine discovery. There are many others, stretching over a wide field of medical endeavour, who have also made a significant contribution to the sum of medical knowledge. But there is no denial that most figures of outstanding research stature have come from the past rather than from the present. Since World War II great reputations for members of the Army Medical Services have not been gained in the research world. To a certain extent the absence of present day leaders is a result of changed techniques and methods in research practice. No longer is it practicable, as it was in times past, for the gifted individual, alone and virtually unaided, to put his hypothesis to the test and therefrom make notable and signal advances. Today's research needs to be a more corporate effort, backed often by a multi-disciplinary approach, by painstaking attention to detail and small changes, and dominated overall by the concepts of statistical significance and computer assistance.

In this context of an altered research environment it is particularly opportune to welcome the recently announced reorganization of Army Medical Services Research. The old Army Medical Directorate Research Committee, an effete and inactive body, has been swept away to be replaced by a two-tier structure with a policy body at the Ministry of Defence and executive control vested in the Commandant and Postgraduate Dean of the Royal Army Medical College, Millbank.

Such a move can only be a good one, for it brings the control and planning of research closer to the action and moreover returns to the College one of its most precious jewels, namely the role of coordinating, controlling and conducting an active research programme. Once again teaching and research can go hand in hand confident of the effective symbiosis that springs from the union.

It is to be hoped that the coordination exercised from the College will extend beyond the confines of purely clinical research. There is an undoubted and undeveloped need to bring closer together the many disparate elements of research done by and for the Army which have a medical connotation. Better coordination is needed between the College and the work for the Army of the Army Personnel Research Committee; between the physiological, psychological and nutrition research at the Army Personnel Research Establishment; and between the extensive medical programme of work at the Chemical Defence Establishment at Porton. Above all there is need for a new initiative in epidemiological research where past efforts to found such a cell at Millbank have been stultified by officialdom. Epidemiology and statistics are a basic requirement for almost all contemporary researchers. The benefit to the College from the creation of such a department would be of inestimable value.
Perhaps most important of all in the reorganization plans is the intention to develop departments of clinical research in military hospitals. In the present inauspicious financial climate a sudden burgeoning of new staff in new departments cannot be expected. Whereas the present beginnings in the Queen Elizabeth Military Hospital at Woolwich may seem too small and too slow for the principal protagonists, it should be recognized that a real start has been made and that further progress can only be in the right direction, onwards.

NOTICE TO AUTHORS
Consequent upon the Journal’s decision to fall in line with the Vancouver Declaration, a further change in style is being imposed upon authors. It is hoped this will be the last such change for a long time. The attention of all potential contributors is drawn to the revised “Notice to Authors” on the inside front cover of this issue and also to the new form for the abbreviated title of the Journal, namely J R Army Med Corps.

REFERENCE

BIRTHDAY HONOURS LIST 1980

CBE
Col P Edmund, QHS, TD, MB, ChB, FRCS(Ed), RAMC(V).

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Maj P R Basford, RAMC. Major M T Rees, QARANC. Capt E J Viner, QARANC.

CONSULTANT EMERITUS

Lord Smith of Marlow, KBE, has been appointed as Consultant Emeritus to the Army in recognition of his services as Honorary Consultant in Surgery to the Army from 1972 to 1979.