

measurement business, and video cassettes can be circulated to ensure standardization of techniques.

A special problem is the collection of data on adverse reactions to drugs, in which the inclusion of data from large populations has obvious value. National bodies such as the Committee on Safety of Medicines as well as the World Health Organization are already active in collecting such reports. Systems which rely on reporting by physicians have obvious limitations and one hopes that the proposed formation of a EULAR register of adverse effects of drugs will lead to the reliable surveillance of large groups of patients.

Ethics were discussed, as were costs—the view was put forward that many trials cost less than they should.

But is it all worthwhile? The answer will lie in the outcome of international multicentre trials. One such trial is already taking place under EULAR

sponsorship and a preliminary report was presented. A number of centres are comparing levamisole in two dosage regimens and placebo. Though some important lessons have already been learned from this study, it appears to have been a useful exercise. We must ask whether this was better than what would have been achieved by the same centres, each pursuing their own ideas. There must be no attempt to control the methodology of clinical trials or to inhibit initiative and the unusual approach. We need a few standardized measurements and a measure of agreement on the definition of diseases and other criteria—not standardized trials. This will be worthwhile only if it improves the safe delivery of new and better treatments to the rheumatic patient. I think it will.

These papers will shortly be published in full as a EULAR monograph.

Notes

World Rheumatism Year

Two-day conference, October 25 and 26, 1977 on 'Rehabilitation—the Need for Co-operation', The Assembly Rooms, Bath.

Topics include Housing, Transport, the Need for Research, Sport and Leisure. Further details from Dr. A. K. Clarke, Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases, Upper Borough Walls, Bath BA1 1RL.

Diseases of Connective Tissue

A symposium to be held on February 9 and 10, 1978 at the Royal College of Physicians, London.

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