EMPIRE RHEUMATISM COUNCIL

TWENTY-FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT*

The 25th Annual Report was presented by the Chairman, Dr. W. S. C. Copeman, at the Annual Meeting held at St. James’s Palace on May 9, 1962.

The chairman stated that the Council was able to look back over 25 years of hard work, an appropriate stage at which to make a brief survey of progress.

Here was a group of diseases—arthritis, fibrositis, gout—as old as mankind and probably more widespread and causing more suffering than any other complaint. Yet it was only in 1924 that the first report had been published about them by the Ministry of Health. The losses caused by these diseases revealed in that report shocked everyone, but still no action was taken. Rheumatism continued to be regarded as an “act of God” for which there was no cure and little relief.

That was the position until 1936, when a few medical men under the chairmanship of Sir William Willcox and later Lord Horder pledged themselves to do something, and their efforts resulted in the formation of the Empire Rheumatism Council. The first task was to survey the field before embarking upon a programme of research and two Travelling Fellows were appointed to sift and bring together all available scientific knowledge in Europe and America.

In 1939 many activities had to be suspended, and it was not until 1946 that the Council was able to start work again. With less than £2,000 in the bank, there were suggestions that the Council should be wound up, but then came substantial offers of support, notably from Sir James Roberts. Encouraged by this, the Research Committee planned an ambitious scheme of research under three broad headings:

- Population surveys, showing the incidence, types, and age groups of rheumatism geographically or by industries.
- Laboratory research, using such techniques as tissue culture and electron microscopy.
- Direct clinical investigation of series of patients.

In 1950, mainly as a result of the activities of the Council, the President of the Royal College of Physicians appointed a special committee on this subject with himself as Chairman. This Committee reported that rheumatology had now to be considered an important specialty of general medicine and advocated the training of talented young men in its techniques. This recognition of rheumatology by academic medicine represented an important step forward, which made possible the establishment of two University Chairs and a Readership (with financial support from the Council). By 1957 the number of research programmes supported by the Council had risen to nine, although the Council was severely handicapped by lack of funds, and at that time Lord Astor of Hever, Lord Kindersley, and a number of other enlightened industrialists came to the rescue. In 1951 the Council had only £4,000 for research, but by 1961 the amount was over £55,000 p.a., and the number of undertakings had risen from nine to 36 original laboratory and clinic research projects in hospitals and universities in Britain and the Commonwealth countries.

1961 had been a notable year in that foundations had been laid for substantial increases in the potential for research. The first and most important of these was the announcement by the Charing Cross Hospital Group that, through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Terence Kennedy, an International Research Institute of Rheumatology was to be built. The Council warmly welcomed this news, for at last a research centre entirely devoted to the rheumatic diseases was to be established in London.

The second outstanding event in 1961 was the Council’s decision to contribute a sum of up to £23,000 to extend the Rheumatism Research Unit at the Northern General Hospital, Edinburgh, under Dr. J. J. R. Duthie. This would allow research to be concentrated on new types of splints and appliances and provide additional accommodation and equipment for orthopaedic research and the Council’s Industrial Unit.

1961 had also seen the publication of a further report by the Royal College of Physicians’ Committee on Chronic Rheumatic Diseases. This recommended the establishment of further special
rheumatism centres in general hospitals and called for the appointment of consultant rheumatologists within the National Health Service.

Research Units

**Mobile Field Survey Unit.**—This is based on Manchester University (Director: Dr. J. S. Lawrence, M.R.C.P.). During the year a Biochemist (Miss J. V. Hewitt) was added to the staff and an American (Dr. W. O'Brien) was seconded from the National Institutes of Health in Washington.

**Industrial Survey Unit.**—This is based on Edinburgh University (Director: Dr. J. J. R. Duthie, F.R.C.P.E.). It is financed entirely by the Empire Rheumatism Council, consists of a doctor, almoner, and secretary, and is accommodated at the Northern General Hospital, Edinburgh. Its aim is to study the social and economic effects of rheumatism on the working population.

**Electron Microscopy Unit.**—St. Thomas's Hospital Medical School, London (Director: Prof. D. V. Davies, M.A., M.B., B.S.). This unit is now fully established, and Prof. Davies is assisted by four doctors and three technicians. Much of the year has been spent in perfecting techniques, particularly with the bone and cartilage preparations which are to be the main field of study.

**Unit studying Drug Action.**—King's College Hospital Medical School (Director: Dr. M. J. H. Smith, M.Pharm., Ph.D., F.R.I.C.). The staff now consists of a post-doctoral fellow, Dr. A. K. Huggins, M.Sc., Ph.D. (the Council's "Wyeth Fellow in Pharmacology"), a pre-doctoral fellow, and a technical assistant. The Unit is situated in the Department of Chemical Pathology with two laboratories and access to additional experimental facilities.

Other Research Projects

Prof. E. G. L. Bywaters, F.R.C.P., is the Empire Rheumatism Council Professor of Rheumatology, at the Postgraduate Medical School of London, and the Medical Research Council Rheumatism Research Unit, Canadian Red Cross Memorial Hospital, Taplow. Fellows from U.S.A., Canada, Greece, New Zealand, and Yugoslavia are working on immunological problems, mainly at Taplow, and Fellows from Australia, Spain, and Brazil are conducting clinical studies, mainly at the Postgraduate Medical School. Dr. A. St. J. Dixon, who is leaving to go to St. Stephen's Hospital, has been replaced as Lecturer by Dr. J. T. Scott, and Dr. Barbara Ansell has taken up her duties at Taplow. The Unit shares in the teaching activities of the Department of Medicine at the Postgraduate Medical School and runs, in addition, a series of rheumatology lectures and tutorials open to postgraduate students from other hospitals.

Chemical and Physical Properties of Connective Tissue (Collagen)

Mr. F. R. Partington, B.Sc., Rheumatism Research Department, University of Manchester.

Dr. J. E. Scott, Ph.D., Canadian Red Cross Memorial Hospital, Taplow.

Dr. T. C. Highton, M.B., M.R.C.P., University of Otago, New Zealand.

Dr. J. Thomas, Ph.D., Low Temperature Research Station, Cambridge.

Dr. R. D. Harkness, M.B., B.S., University College, London.

Dr. Thomas Bitter, St. Mary's Hospital, London.

Dr. P. G. Walker, Ph.D., M.B., Ch.B., Institute of Orthopaedics, London.

Dr. D. Armstrong, B.Sc., A.R.I.C., Ph.D., St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London.

Dr. Helen Muir, D.Phil., St. Mary's Hospital, London.

Dr. A. G. Lloyd, B.Sc., Ph.D., A.R.I.C., Department of Biochemistry, University College, Cardiff.

The Rheumatoid Factor

Prof. J. R. Squire, F.R.C.P., University of Birmingham.

Dr. J. N. McCormick, M.B., Ch.B., Oxford Regional Rheumatic Diseases Centre, Aylesbury, Bucks.

Auto-Immune Mechanism in Rheumatoid Arthritis

Dr. P. J. Lachman, M.B., B.Chir., M.R.C.P., Department of Pathology, Cambridge University.

Dr. I. Leslie, B.Sc., Ph.D., Department of Biochemistry, Queen's University, Belfast.

Physiology and Metabolism of Corticosteroids in Rheumatoid Arthritis

Prof. I. E. Bush, M.A., Ph.D., M.B., Department of Physiology, Birmingham University.

Dr. Oswald Savage, O.B.E., F.R.C.P., West London Hospital.

Dr. H. F. West, M.R.C.P., Sheffield Centre for the Investigation and Treatment of Rheumatic Diseases.

Dr. D. L. Gardner, M.D., Ph.D., M.R.C.P.E., Edinburgh University.

Pathology of Osteo-arthritis


Abnormal Chemical Changes in Gout

Dr. Marjorie McCallum, M.B., Ch.B., Postgraduate Medical School, London.

Synovial and Other Tissues involved in the Rheumatic Diseases

Prof. R. Lovell, M.D., F.R.C.P., F.R.A.C.P., University of Melbourne, Australia.

Dr. G. W. G. Sharp, Ph.D., Institute of Clinical Research, The Middlesex Hospital, London.

Dr. John Paul, Ph.D., University of Glasgow.

Co-ordinated Medical-Orthopaedic Survey of the Rheumatic Diseases

Mr. R. N. Tinning, F.R.C.S.E., Rheumatic Unit, Northern General Hospital, Edinburgh.

*This fellowship was established through the generosity of John Wyeth and Brother Ltd.*
Survey of Rheumatic Diseases in Cornwall
Dr. E. R. Hargreaves, West Cornwall.

Support for Research Units.—The Council has given financial support to Rheumatism Research Units at the following hospitals during the year:

- The London Hospital (Dr. W. S. Tegner, F.R.C.P.)
- Northern General Hospital (Dr. J. J. R. Duthie, F.R.C.P.E.)
- Westminster Hospital, London (Dr. F. Dudley Hart, F.R.C.P.)

Study of Twins with Rheumatoid Arthritis.—This has continued with the co-operation of a large number of centres in Great Britain and on the Continent of Europe.

Long-Term Trial of Gold Therapy in Rheumatoid Arthritis.—This trial, which has been going on for the past 4 years, has now been completed and the results published.

Geigy Travelling Fellowships
Mr. D. L. Savill, M.B., Ch.B., F.R.C.S., Edinburgh
Dr. W. R. M. Alexander, F.R.C.P.E., Northern General Hospital, Edinburgh
Mr. Louis Solomon, F.R.C.S., London
Prof. J. H. Kelgren, F.R.C.P., F.R.C.S., Manchester University

Education
The work of the Council's research workers is published in journals read by scientists throughout the world.

In 1959 the Council began to issue periodic "Reports on Rheumatic Diseases" to all General Practitioners in the National Health Service. Each consists of an account of some aspect of work on rheumatic diseases. The twelve following titles have now appeared:

- What About Rheumatism?
- Differential Diagnosis of Polyarthritis
- Laboratory Tests in Rheumatic Diseases
- Routine Management of Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Corticosteroids in the Treatment of Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Surgical Treatment of Rheumatoid and Osteo-arthritis
- Gout
- Systemic (Disseminated) Lupus Erythematosus
- Cervical Disk Lesions
- Low Back Pain and Sciatica
- The Painful Shoulder
- Ankylosing Spondylitis

These twelve issues have now been reprinted in booklet form, available free from the Council on request.

Some years ago the Council felt there was also a need for brief but authoritative booklets for patients. Four titles have now been issued (Rheumatic Arthritis, Osteo-arthritis, Gout, and Rheumatic Fever) and others are in preparation.

The Council also held several all-day scientific symposia.

A collection of slides for teaching purposes entitled "The Rheumatic Diseases" has been prepared during the year with the help of a number of rheumatic centres and will shortly be on sale or loan.

The Heberden Society for the advancement of the study of the rheumatic diseases is affiliated to the Council. In view of the long waiting list, the permitted membership of the society has recently been increased.

Commonwealth
A full report of the autonomous affiliated Associations in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand is included in the Annual Report.

HEBERDEN SOCIETY

Clinical Meeting.—The Society met in Brighton on May 12, 1962, when the President, Dr. G. D. Kersley, was in the chair.

Prof. E. G. L. Bywaters (Taplow) gave an appropriate and entertaining discourse on Gout in the Times and Person of George IV.*

* To be published in the Annals in December, 1962.

Mr. A. G. O'Malley (Liverpool) was invited to talk on Influence of Flexor and Adductor Muscles in Osteo-Arthritis of the Hip. He believed that shortening of soft tissues was not an effect but the cause of primary osteo-arthritis of the hip, the mechanism being a continued excessive compression of the femoral head in the acetabulum, and he advised early performance of the muscle release operation. His technique consisted always of division of the iliopsoas tendon, with in a minority of cases relaxation of the rectus femoris, tensor...