INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE

It is usual for a scientific journal occasionally to allocate its entire space to the proceedings of an important symposium. This issue is devoted to the proceedings of a symposium on "Inflammatory Bowel Disease in the Young Adult" held at the Royal Army Medical College on 28th June 1978.

The two diseases conventionally included under this title, Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis, are important causes of disability in the services. They predominantly affect young adults; they are of uncertain aetiology; and they are difficult to treat. Moreover, they pose problems for general practitioners, clinicians and researchers in all disciplines, and all would wish to keep themselves up to date in this important field. This is the rationale for such a publication.

The symposium brought together experts in all aspects of these diseases and was extremely well attended and received.

We are grateful to them for allowing their contributions to be published.

SYMPOSIUM ON INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE IN THE YOUNG ADULT

OPENING ADDRESS

MAJOR GENERAL H A J REAY, QHP, MB, FRCP, DCH

The Royal Army Medical College has two main areas of activity. One comprises the Central Reference Laboratories in entomology, in microbiology including parasitology, in histology which includes cytology screening and in biochemistry which includes neonatal screening for PKU and shortly for thyroxine. All of these reference laboratories are involved in research, some to improve methodology and some into more major projects. They also have the job of training all the pathology technicians for the Army, which is a major commitment. The other main area of responsibility is postgraduate medical training.

We hold courses for doctors joining the Army. Following field medical training they spend five weeks here during which we emphasize the care of missile and blast injuries, and many other aspects of military primary care. Young Doctors who have finished their Pre-Registration jobs may have to act as General Practitioners or Regimental Medical Officers in all kinds of circumstances, and one cannot expect the medical school and pre-registration experience to have encompassed all that they require to know in order to operate independently at an early stage. We also provide an up-dating course for more senior officers. A second aspect is specialist postgraduate training which is organised from here but takes place in military hospitals with secondments to special units in civil hospitals.

The holding of symposia on subjects which are important to Service Medical Officers is a particular interest of mine, and recently we have held such symposia on Head Injuries, and on Blast Injuries, as well as the annual meetings on Military Pathology and Military Public Health. Today is the "awayday" of a conference of Medical Generals from Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, the United States and our own three Services, initiated by our Medical Directorate. The Professor of Military Medicine, Colonel Roberts, tends to point out to me that his subject of gastro-enterology is the most important because it encompasses some of the numerically largest causes of invaliding from the Service. Obviously peptic ulceration is the most important of these, but Inflammatory Bowel Disease is not a rare disorder in Service practice. We are very much encouraged by your coming here. I welcome the presence of the Chairman of the Tri-Service Postgraduate Council, my colleague Surgeon Rear Admiral John Harrison; also Air Commodore Kelly, and Surgeon Captain Milton-Thompson, the Advisers in Medicine to the Royal Air Force, and the Royal Navy; and all medical officers of the regular Services and of the Reserve Army. But especially, I would like to welcome so many distinguished civil physicians who have come here to speak and to take part in what I feel sure will be a useful and successful conference.