

OBITUARY

ARCHIBALD VIVIAN HILL, C.H., O.B.E., M.A., Sc.D., L.L.D., F.R.S.

It is with great regret that we learned of the death of Professor A. V. Hill, on June 3rd, 1977, and so soon after we published a special number of this journal in celebration of his ninetieth birthday (*Brit.J.Sports Med.*, 10: 4 – 1976). In this number E. J. Hamley wrote an appreciation of the contributions Prof. Hill made to the physiology of muscle, for which he and Otto Mayerhof were awarded the Nobel Prize in 1922. They investigated the chemistry of muscle contraction, the role of glycogen, the production of adenosine triphosphate and the place of the energy-rich phosphates familiar to every student of medicine, physiotherapy and physical education, and one of the most significant pieces of work that laid down the understanding of muscle physiology, respiration and nutrition.

A hard-bound presentation copy of the celebration number of this journal was donated by Professor Ernst Joki, and handed personally to Professor Hill by a student member of BASM, who was received with the greatest charm and courtesy, and she must have been one of the last visitors he had before his final short illness. He was still at work in his study, making critical notes on articles in the current *Journal of Physiology*. We offer our sympathy to his son and daughters, and also to his many colleagues and former students, for whom he was a figure of respect and affection all their academic lives.

H. E. Robson

CORRESPONDENCE

NEGLECT OF SPORTS MEDICINE

A letter appeared in the *British Medical Journal* on July 9th, 1977, written by Mr. Frank d'Abreu, Ch.M., F.R.C.S. It drew attention to the serious nature of some injuries sustained in Rugby football, and the lack of statistical information about their frequency and nature, at least in Rugby Union. He stated that the U.K. is the only member of the EEC that lacks a centre for the training of doctors in sports medicine, despite the directive of the EEC Council of Ministers in October 1973. As our Association has done a little to rectify this situation, the editor replied:—

EDITOR'S REPLY

28th July, 1977

Dear Mr. d'Abreu,

We noted your letter regarding "Neglect of Sports Medicine" in the British Medical Journal, 9th July, 1977. While agreeing with you generally, a few of us are making an attempt to establish sports medicine in the United Kingdom, but it is a very hard job to convince the medical establishment of the necessity of a new speciality.

We regard sports medicine as being a branch of occupational medicine and have won some recognition after a long struggle, in that sports medicine is now accepted by the Conjoint Board of the Royal Colleges as one of the six elective special subjects that may be taken in the new Diploma of Rheumatology and Rehabilitation.

Our Association so far numbers some 400 doctors, most of them in the United Kingdom, but also scattered throughout the world; and about the same number of physiologists, physical educationists, physiotherapists and even analytical chemists to horse racing authorities. We publish the British Journal of Sports Medicine quarterly.

We have attempted to do epidemiological studies on the incidence of sports injuries in certain geographical regions and with the co-operation of the Association of Coroners, to try to obtain details of all deaths occurring in sport. Despite encouragement from that Association, few individual coroners bothered to submit details and the end result was not at all satisfactory, but it did draw attention to the relevant governing bodies of sport. Unfortunately, a death on the rugby field is still considered a glorious triumph, whereas a trivial injury to a school boy in a gymnasium virtually leads to a ministerial investigation.

You are right in assuming that Great Britain is still the only E.E.C. country with no centre for training in sports medicine. We have had several discussions with various ministers responsible for sport and for health and have been able to make a very small inroad into this lack of training. We have run courses in 1975, 1976 and 1977 following the syllabus of the International Federation of Sports Medicine, but have only been able, so far, to include some 120 doctors. The present economic situation with restrictions about Section 63 courses for general practitioners, and the decrease in grants to consultants and junior hospital doctors for post-graduate training, will almost certainly lead to difficulties in obtaining students for future courses. Negotiations are being made, to get support for future courses, but the time is still far distant before we can establish a proper permanent centre for post-graduate sports medicine training.

Our aims at present are to give as many junior hospital doctors and clinical assistants as possible an elementary training in the principles of sports medicine, and to try to establish a few centres staffed by a handful of consultants who may be considered expert in this field for the purpose of training others.

A great many of the injuries occurring during sport are not really specific to sport and the National Health Service, even in its present run down condition, still copes very well indeed with compound fractures, complete tendon tears, lacerations, spinal and skull injuries and medical conditions such as coronary ischaemia, which may occur suddenly during participation in sport, but more specific sports injuries such as "microtrauma" to tendons, peri-tendinitis in runners, tenosynovitis in oarsmen and canoeists do need specialist attention not generally available in the National Health Service. However, we are fortunate in having a few people in this country who can recognize these problems and cope with them.

Other aspects of sports medicine, such as the abuse of anabolic steroids are also under consideration in collaboration with our colleagues in pathology, biochemistry and horse dope detection laboratories.

We are glad to see your letter appear in the British Medical Journal as it will help to draw attention to a condition that many of us would like to alleviate.

Yours sincerely,

H. E. Robson

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TO THE EDITOR

5th August, 1977

Dear Sir,

Thank you very much for your encouraging letter about my letter to the British Medical Journal. I have always been of the opinion that we have too many different bodies dealing not only with sport but with sport and medicine. I have for example been asked to speak to the Conjoint Board, to the President of the Royal College of Surgeons, the Medical Commission on Accident Prevention, the Red Cross and St. John's Ambulance Brigade. I have no doubt that like yourself I have been received with great courtesy, but without feeling that any great impact had been made. I can't help feeling that with regard to any government decision the principle of division and rule is applied, with the result that nothing is done. I am delighted to know that you and your association have been doing so much in this direction. What will impress them however is the preventive aspect of Sports Medicine, and I have of course evidence from horse racing that if measures are advised and implemented after consultation with the governing bodies the accidents are very significantly reduced. I feel that there should be a doctor who is recognised by his colleagues as an authority on Sports Medicine to carry out a similar role in all our leading sports.

The first important step is of course to get proper statistics of the injuries in each sport, and like yourself I am very concerned about the injuries in Rugby football, and feel that there should be statutory duties laid down by a doctor associated with the sport to ensure that all deaths and unacceptable injuries such as paraplegias and traumatic encephalopathy are reported to headquarters. There are so many branches of Sports Medicine in other countries particularly in sports psychology, which tend to be neglected in this country, that the only solution I can envisage would be a Diploma in Sports Medicine, quite apart from the Diploma in Rheumatology and Rehabilitation, and certainly worthy of more than being one of the six elected special subjects taken in the new diploma of the Conjoint Board. I had felt that the ideal place for a Diploma would be a University Medical School in conjunction with a specialist physical education college where so much of the field work is now being done. I am well aware of the efforts made by you and your associates in the courses you ran at Loughborough College, Brunel and Jordanhill.

Thank you for sending me the issue of your journal on the detection of doping in race horses. As you may well know, horses being more valuable than their riders are better looked after, and at every race course there are fully qualified veterinary surgeons, whereas our race course medical officers are not usually specialists in traumatology; they serve in a voluntary capacity. My aim would be that a diplomate in Sports Medicine should be required as a visiting specialist.

Yours sincerely,

Frank d'Abreu, Ch.M., F.R.C.S.

RUGBY INJURIES

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Dear Sir,

I read with great interest the statistics related to rugby injuries in the report by T. Durkin, *Brit.J.Sp.Med.* 11:1 1977 particularly as I played first grade football between 1953 and 1964. It is surprising to find that the members of the "engine room", i.e. the second row lock forwards, had the least number of reported injuries particularly when one considers the great strain exerted in set scrums. I believe that research needs to be carried out on the effect on the spine of stress related to scrummaging. I suggest this because recent X-Rays on a second row forward's spine have shown degeneration in the levels T12-L1 and L5-S1 with mechanical instability at the lumbo sacral joint.

Yours sincerely,

Barrie Abrahams

AREA ASSOCIATIONS OF B.A.S.M.

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6th June 1977

Dear Sir,

May I appeal through your correspondence column to any members of the British Association of Sport and Medicine, to contact me with view to forming an Area Association? Apart from the Journal and occasional attendance at courses, I feel somewhat isolated in my interest. I imagine that there must be several likeminded members from our professional disciplines who would welcome the chance of meeting together.

I would be most pleased to hear from them with their views regarding the formation of such an association together with suggestions for its title. I would then convene a meeting to initiate discussions as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

James W. Walker

Will anyone interested in the Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire area please contact Dr. Walker Editor B.J.S.M.