EDITORIAL

In this issue we include a variety of clinical articles from various parts of the world; osteoarthrosis of the knee from Ireland and Teesside, nerve lesions caused by cycling from Puerto Rico, frequent minor injuries in the Martial Arts from the USA, and ischial stress fractures from Oxford. The exercise physiology reports are mainly from the UK, two from Loughborough University, of which Dr. Clyde Williams, PhD, known to those who have attended Loughborough Sports Medicine courses in the past five years as a hard working helper in the organisation of the courses as well as lecturing and running demonstrations in the laboratories, is a co-author. One paper from the USA involves animal experiment (but not vivisection procedures) a departure from our usual run of human physiology, but possibly making some contribution to the effects of exercise upon the pregnant.

Two Sports Medicine courses are announced, run by BASM. The Basic Orientation Course, following the FIMS scheme, will take place in Glasgow from September 18th-23rd, and the advanced Course, the first we have run, at Bisham Abbey, Berkshire, from October 10th-14th, and the latter will be followed by the Association’s Annual General Meeting. Details of these are given elsewhere in this journal. Section 63 approval has been granted for general practitioners attending the courses.

The future of the British Association of Sport and Medicine, and of course this journal of which the Association is the Publisher, are again under serious discussion, and it is difficult to know the best lines to be taken. When the BASM was first founded, with under a hundred members and no journal, a token subscription was all that was needed, and an Honorary Secretary/Treasurer was able to carry out the few necessary duties with only a little secretarial help. With the present membership of 1,300, of which 230 live overseas, the administration of the Association has become a major occupation for four or five officers, with some secretarial help. This has enabled the Association to continue to function, and to publish the journal, but not really to anyone’s satisfaction. The increase in subscriptions at the beginning of 1982 has enabled us to keep clear of debts, but not to initiate any developments that are needed with the increased interest in sports medicine throughout the UK and the rest of the world. It was hoped that the establishment of regional branches of the Association would bring activities within reach of most of our UK members, but such regions as are established have not really got into full swing yet, and depend too much upon one enthusiast trying to stimulate activity in a morass of inertia. Various sports medicine meetings are being organised in London and the provinces, often with our members playing an important part, but not running these meetings as BASM projects, or with any attempt at co-ordination with adjacent regions or with BASM secretariat. The suggestion that the post of Honorary Secretary be replaced with a paid Administrator has been put forward and is under serious consideration. This would be an expensive procedure, and inevitably mean a substantial rise in the subscription rate. Such a rise can only be justified if members get more service from the Association; more opportunities for education, for meeting each other, for obtaining technical advice. Another subscription rise will inevitably lead to more resignations, mostly from a ‘sleeping membership’, but also from some upon whom extra expenses will produce some hardship. Unlike many professional bodies, BASM and the journal are serving the interests of their members’ hobby, not a major professional activity upon which they depend for a substantial part of their income. In the UK there are only two or perhaps three doctors for whom sports medicine is their major source of income.

The future of the journal has also to be decided, and one suggestion is that it should be handed over to a commercial enterprise, probably a publisher with experience in producing medical and other professional journals of good repute. A sixty page quarterly journal could be sold to our Association at perhaps £12 a year for each member and non-member subscriber, and advertising revenue would certainly increase (though it is hoped that it would not occupy 55% of the space, as is the case with some medical journals and women’s magazines). Accounts for 1982 show that the four issues of the journal, averaging seventy four pages each, with two only filled with advertisements, cost just under seven pounds each for the year. External subscriptions brought in £5,000, and an additional £3,000 was from advertisers.

Criticisms are still being levelled at the quality of contributions to the journal, perhaps with some justification. We still find it difficult to get good clinical articles from the UK, where there are of course many other specialist clinical journals. As usual, most of our critics are amongst those who do not contribute any or much of their own work. The Executive Committee has already granted permission for some of the Association’s funds to be made available to pay for articles specially commissioned from experts in various fields, and in the absence of high quality submitted articles, this may have to be done. It has also been suggested that one or more assistant editors be appointed, so volunteers are invited to step forward, on both the clinical and the sports science sides, ready to take over on the Editor’s decease, dismissal, or resignation on take-over.
The Editor would also appreciate volunteers to send in abstracts of any important articles from Sports Medical or other clinical and scientific journals that are relevant to our activities. Reports on scientific meetings are requested as well. For instance, a complaint has been made by a prominent member of our Scottish Area, BASM, to the effect that we have failed to report details of several well-attended meetings held in the North. As we have received no reports from the organisers, we cannot really be expected to write up the proceedings of these meetings. It would be helpful if organising committees running meetings would delegate the task of preparing a report to a member of the committee, and let us share the material given.

Computerisation of membership and other mailing lists is also under consideration. This would enable address labels to be printed easily and rapidly, could be up-dated monthly, would print out the many unnecessary subscription reminders, and enable computer print-outs of the total membership list, of lists of those living in particular geographical regions, or with specific qualifications or interests such as orthopaedic surgeons, podiatrists, medical officers of football clubs or all members living in Wales. Such a service would take up quite a lot of hard work in the supply of data for programming, so it is essential that we have correct names, addresses, qualifications and any special interests or appointments, especially if these have changed since the original application for membership was made.

ARTICLES PUBLISHED ELSEWHERE OF SPORTS MEDICAL INTEREST

BOXING. The controversy over the justification for continuing this activity still rages. At the beginning of this year, several reports appeared in various medical newspapers and journals, mostly condematory, following activity by the British Medical Association suggesting that the sport be banned. Few of the arguments raised on either side add much to the evidence and views stated at the BASM’s 1963 two-day conference on Medical Aspects of Boxing held at Goldsmiths’ College, London, with Proceedings published subsequently by Pergamon Press, edited by A. L. Bass, J. L. Blonstein, R. D. James and J. G. P. Williams (1965). The medical risks of amateur boxing are few, and even professional boxing is much more strictly controlled from a medical point of view than it was in 1963. The moral issue, of whether it is permissible to allow people to participate in a sport whose main objective is to inflict injury upon another, is less clearly defined. The techniques needed for unarmed self-defence have changed during this century, and the introduction of the oriental martial arts have developed techniques that are more effective, and more likely to inflict fatal injury if misapplied. The increased violence of life, and the numerous attacks upon women especially, justify the need for teaching self defence but the correct methods have to be taught. It is hoped that clear evidence for or against boxing be brought forward, to justify its abolition or retention, but I have no doubt that there will still be arguments about it in twenty years time. Not only is there concern in the UK, but reports from Finland indicate grave concern there as well.

WORLD MEDICAL GAMES will, it is planned, be an annual event, and the next will be held in Paris from August 28th-September 3rd. Details from “Paris Games”, c/o Editorial Secretary, Medical Publications, 76 Dean Street, LONDON W1A 1BU.

“SAILING DOCTOR OF THE YEAR”. September 17th and 18th at Cowes, for doctors sailing dinghies and small craft. Applications to Mr. Jeremy Oakley, 76 Dean Street, LONDON W1A 1BU. Cost for the weekend, £60, and 420s, Lasers and Wayfarers will be provided together with accommodation and meals.