The Spring Meeting of the British Geriatric Society was held at the Atlantic Hotel, Newquay, Cornwall on April 10th and 11th, 1970, by kind invitation of Dr. C. T. Andrews and Dr. T. Wilson. This was an excellent and well-attended Meeting including special visits to the Psychogeriatric Unit and the Geriatric Day Hospital at Barncoose Hospital, Redruth, Cornwall. Dr. C. T. Andrews welcomed the Society, recalling an earlier visit twenty-one years ago. He was followed by Dr. T. Wilson who gave an account of the development of the West Cornwall Geriatric Service, particularly as regards mental disturbance in old age. Dr. J. F. Donovan (Redruth) reviewed a year’s working of the Barncoose Psychogeriatric Assessment Unit recording 336 admissions in 29 beds, serving a population of 280,000. 30% of these admissions were emergencies. The help given by this new Unit to the work of the psychiatric hospitals was considered very striking. The discharge rate from the Assessment Unit was 46.2% compared with 26% of a similar age group in psychiatric hospitals. Dr. W. B. Wright (Exeter) described a recent investigation in Exeter into the causes of mental disturbances in old age, listed common and generally accepted factors, pointing out the immense complexity of the subject. Computer analysis revealed that while isolation was of importance, it was even more so when associated with dependence upon others. 10% of patients reviewed showed a low serum B 12 level in the presence of reasonably normal haemoglobin. In many cases, the diet appeared inadequate despite supplementation from outside sources. Dr. T. C. Picton-Williams (London) described a pilot-scheme for an integrated psychogeriatric service closely involving the Local Authority, a prominent aim of the service being resettlement of the recovered patient in the community. Dr. W. E. R. Budd (Dartford) spoke on similar developments in his area and stressed the need of liaison between the various clinical disciplines concerned. Dr. Ashley presented a paper on behalf of Dr. E. V. B. Morton (Nottingham) on unrecognised and untreated medical and psychological needs of old people. A feature of this paper was the high incidence of cases referred through non-medical channels, i.e. via the Mental Welfare Officer. The reasons for this were discussed. A medical failure to recognise either the need itself or its true nature suggests the necessity for more medical postgraduate education in this area of geriatric failure. All these papers showed a remarkable similarity of findings of psychiatric and geriatric workers under very differing conditions. All agreed in stressing the need for combined control by psychiatrists and geriatricians working together and the enhanced success which is obtained when such a cooperation is united with a full invesitigational policy.

Dr. R. B. Parnell (Birmingham) presented an important statistical paper, showing the relation in psychiatric hospitals between the consultant establishment and the discharge rate, pointing out how improved results can be obtained by combining an optimum medical establishment with the appointment of a geriatric physician and the establishment of a Day Hospital. (This paper will be published in full in Gerontologia Clinica.) Dr. J.T. Leeming (Manchester), speaking on Osteomalacia described the screening of elderly people in this condition and Dr. J. R. Cox (Sheffield) communicated the results of research of electrolytes and intracellular fluids in
depressive states. He noted a frequency of potassium depletion in depression which he felt might be associated with aldosterone deficiency. He considered potassium of likely value in such psychiatric conditions. Dr. L. A. Wilson (Aberdeen) spoke on ‘Mental Assessment in Relation to Performance in certain activities of Daily Living’, stressing the value of case conferences studies of patients undergoing rehabilitation and pointing out how occupational therapists’ assessment of mental function

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generally closely coincides with the medical view. Dr. A. I. Suchett-Kaye (London) reported a preliminary survey of stroke patients in terms of their psychological function. Dr. R. A. Robinson (Dumfries) delivered a paper on ‘Assessment Scales in a Psycho-geriatric Unit’, in which he developed work previously published on this theme.

Full discussion of these papers took place and a Council Meeting of the Society followed the last paper. The Society itself expressed its gratitude to the organisers of the Symposium, to the West Cornwall Hospital Management Committee for their kind hospitality and to Upjohn Limited who kindly provided the printed programmes.