

EDITORIAL

ANNUAL DALHOUSIE REFRESHER COURSE

The 39th Annual Dalhousie Refresher Course was held at Halifax from November 22nd to 25th in conjunction with the teaching hospitals and Faculty of Medicine of the University. The Refresher Course is sponsored by the Postgraduate Division of The Faculty of Medicine and its purpose, as its name implies, is to keep physicians in the Atlantic Provinces abreast of current medical practice through review of standard medical treatment and presentation of new or theoretical concepts in diagnosis and treatment.

The course is arranged to give the maximum benefit of exposure in the least amount of time. Two one-and-one-half hour small group clinics in various fields are held each morning, open to the visiting physicians. During the afternoons, a program of lectures and panel discussions is presented to the entire group of visitors.

The small group clinics are held in the teaching hospitals and are concerned with topics of interest to a family physician in his every day practice of medicine, including common problems in medicine, obstetrics and gynaecology, pediatrics and surgery. They are led by staff members of the various departments and are organized around case presentations with discussions followed by question periods.

The afternoon programs were either lectures delivered by visiting lecturers considered authorities in their respective fields, or by panel discussions by several men who examined one problem from different aspects.

The morning clinics covered practical material of interest and use to a practicing physician, and the small group aspect insured that each visitor would be able to gain benefit from attendance. The subject matter was well-diversified and each section of clinics contained at least one topic of interest to any

physician. There was only slight overlap of material from day to day to the next, which kept wasted time to a low level. However, it is to be regretted that there was often conflict between two clinics held at the same time on completely unrelated topics which were of great interest and importance to a family physician. Some obvious examples of this were the concurrent presentation of Anemia and Myocardial Infarction, or Asthma and Hypertension. These problems take up a great deal of a general practitioner's time. By attending one clinic the other was missed, and the visiting physician lost instruction on a condition he sees almost daily.

There are several ways by which this unfortunate situation may be resolved, some less advantageous or desirable than others. An obvious answer lies in lengthening the time over which the Refresher Course extends. But this would require the visitors to be absent from their practices longer than at present. Perhaps these clinics could be presented more than once during the week by the same or different leaders. If some clinics were to be deleted at the expense of others more time would be available. But who is to act as judge and jury on which are more vital? The afternoon programs could be eliminated, and twice as many clinics could be presented in the same length of time, but would this be beneficial or deleterious to the stated goals of the course? A poll of those who attended this year might yield an indication of popular opinion from those to whom the course is directed. A perfect solution will be difficult to achieve for in essence the basic problem is the same one faced by medical educators across North America, that of an increasing volume of material to be presented in a diminishing, or at best static, period of time.

C. BUDD.