

The Wider World

DIABETES IN GREECE

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FOR the first time since the Ancient Greeks named and described diabetes, the discovery of insulin made the disease worth treating. But special facilities (e.g., for blood-tests) were soon found to be necessary, and in all medically progressive countries diabetic clinics were set up to provide expert knowledge. So, when I went not long ago to the splendid and modern city of Athens, to seek winter sun and ancient art, I was not surprised to find, and to be asked to inspect, the "Diabetic Centre of Athens". This was recently built by the Institute of National Insurance, which corresponds to our National Health scheme. The centre seemed to have been set up almost regardless of expense; but financed by contributions at 10% of salaries or income-tax, the Greek scheme may have larger resources than ours. All Greek diabetics are entitled to free treatment and drugs from the centre; but some prefer to pay their local doctors, at least as long as everything goes well.

The diabetic centre was planned and built on the advice, and now works under the direction, of Dr. N. S. Papaspyros who, I am proud to say, studied at my London clinic, King's College Hospital. He also visited all the principal clinics in Europe and America so as to incorporate their best features in the Greek organisation.

The centre is a creation on its own and is not attached to any general or teaching hospital as it would be in Britain (sharing in its ancillary services and consultants): under its own experts it has set up pathology and X-ray services and even a cobalt bomb. The outpatients are mostly the working population of Athens, of which the estimated diabetic population is 20,000–25,000.

I believe it took a long time to convince the Institute of National Insurance to spend this considerable sum of money; but by doing so they will not only improve and maintain the immediate working health, but also (by continuous good control and supervision) achieve a long-term economy by preventing or minimising the common complications of diabetes, such as blindness or loss of limbs from gangrene, necessitating a permanent and high disability pension.

The inpatient block consists of 120 beds in 4–5-bed wards, on seven floors, and a few sumptuous private suites. The inpatients come from all over Greece, which is believed to have 90,000–100,000 diabetics.

The need for this centre is shown by the enrolment of 3000 patients in the twelve months after it opened, and by the addition of 200 new patients a month (8–9 a day)—and all this in only the early days of the clinic. These numbers throw a terrific strain on the medical staff, which consists of Dr. Papaspyros and two doctors skilled in cardiology and neuropathy who are receiving instruction in the treatment and management of diabetes. And so a strong team is being trained—quite necessary to cope with the heavy increase of work. There is adequate and specially trained nursing staff.

The centre is a fine building architecturally, as well as most efficient in functional equipment. It certainly aroused my envy by having enough beds always to admit at once patients who need urgent specialised treatment. Athens is much better off than London and other major centres in Great Britain, because a coma can hardly be adequately treated in a general medical ward.

In England Now

A Running Commentary by Peripatetic Correspondents

CAN I offer you the *Moulin Rouge* or would you rather have the Y.M.C.A.? The Ministry of Health want to put us off smoking cigarettes. The first issue of discouraging posters has been followed by a second, less gloomy, but even the sheep smoking cigarettes ignore the positive appeal. If you have children it is always better to say "Let's" than "Don't". Have they never seen how you sell cars, corsets, cosmetics, or even cigarettes?

Look now on this picture and on this. That nasty, long-haired, tight-trousered young man whose yellow malodorous fingers we know. That revolting young woman whose unappetising undergarments hide even more negative charms. Both obviously smoking reefers and probably picking their noses. No romance, no snob value, no careersmanship.

Can no-one in Savile Row of all places plagiarise the idyllic scene of clean and manly young man with damsel pure and beautiful, apple blossom overhead. "Darling, you smell so nice, I'm so glad you gave up smoking." Or, against his expensive car, "I could never have fallen for a girl who smoked." Can't they pay a fee to a racing motorist, a handsome actor, or even a popsinger, whose photograph would say with a smile, "I never smoke now."

The Black Widow and her nasty brood are useless—hell has yawned for æons and we have only yawned back.

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Jane cruises successfully through the classroom without either effort or interest, to the despair of her teachers. After her casual negotiation of the 11+ we looked for a school only to find many which wanted Jane but few her pony. In one school, however, there were daily lessons in show-jumping and, implicitly, "G.C.E. not objected to."

Although the rest of the family is not particularly horsey, we all have to face newly cleaned "tack" strewn about the living-space; and the other day, while Jane's dam was out shopping, her sire found himself watching a telly programme about the horse. He learned that the horse is descended from the tapir and that someone is trying to breed horses back to tapirs, on the thesis that intelligence has been bred out of them at the cost of ability to jump or run. The breeding-back has apparently met with some success, and horses are beginning to look like tapirs again. Jane's sire got quite enthusiastic about this and spoke to a colleague about it. The colleague is an Ulsterman and characteristically has a fewness of fine words. "Who," he asked, "wants to ride round the countryside on an intelligent tapir?"

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We have all heard of the people who, while watching surgical operations on television, faint and crack their skulls on the floor or the fireplace, or who subsequently develop anxiety states about themselves. Properly presented, however, these programmes can do an immense amount of good. For instance, I was explaining to a six-year-old that I was going to give her an injection, and that she would feel a prick of the needle, but nothing else. "It's all right," she said, "I know all about it. I saw it being done on *Emergency—Ward 10*."

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Ol. Ricin.
's surprisin',
Par. Liq.
Isn't quick
And it's cashier
And greashier
Than Magnesia.
But wenna
Take Senna
Or Jalap...
O Halap!

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