

# FORENSIC MEDICINE

EDITOR: HARRISON S. MARTLAND, M.D.

## INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

### THE REPORTING OF COMMON AND UNUSUAL MEDICOLEGAL CASES BY PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS

FOR several years the writer has conducted, at the Newark City Hospital, weekly clinico-pathological conferences with the aid of the Attending and Intern Staffs and his associates in the hospital laboratories and Medical Examiner's Office of Essex County.

These meetings are open to any physician in the community or elsewhere who cares to attend. They start at nine o'clock in the evening so that doctors will not miss their evening office hours, and frequently last about three hours.

Interesting clinical cases from the wards and clinics illustrating almost every field of medicine and surgery are shown, their histories being read and their physical findings demonstrated by the interns. An open discussion follows calling for a differential diagnosis and the prognosis and treatment are briefly reviewed.

A brief report on follow-ups in cases shown at previous conferences is an important feature, the necropsy findings being shown whenever available.

The last half of the meeting is given over to the presentation of autopsy material from interesting cases occurring during the week. The clinical phases of the cases are evaluated and both gross and microscopic findings demonstrated.

In other words these meetings are conducted along lines similar to the well known CPC's now in use in almost all teaching institutions.

We feel that too often over-extensive detail in the presentation of a case makes

the diagnosis so obvious that the listening physician finds his interest dulled and his keenness less sharp. If something is left to the imagination of the listener, he remains constantly in the picture and on the alert. A variety of cases at each clinic, in our opinion, makes it more certain that every doctor present will take home with him something of value to his daily work.

For years we have presented at each meeting the histories, photographs or actual specimens of medicolegal cases from the Medical Examiner's Office.

We have done this for several reasons: (1) To afford interesting variety with the consequent mental rest—incidental to the consideration of types of cases with which the average practitioner is unfamiliar but must occasionally meet. (2) To stimulate interest in forensic medicine, unfortunately a woefully neglected field in this country. (3) To demonstrate that important medical and surgical facts of constant value in the practice of medicine may be obtained from a Medical Examiner's Office.

The foregoing brief description of our work in Essex County and Newark, N. J. is the basis of a plea for greater cooperation between constituted hospital and medicolegal authorities in the reporting and publishing of cases of interest in forensic medicine.

It is unfortunate that because of this lack of cooperation a vast amount of material of deep scientific interest is lost. Medicolegal knowledge in this country is

still mediocre but is rapidly becoming one of the outstanding branches of modern science. Its importance in the detection of crime is poorly understood by laymen and physicians alike. With the material available in the United States an awakened interest by the medical profession would soon place this country in the forefront in these matters.

The cases reported in this issue are a few of the many presented from time to time before these conferences. We have asked those who are most familiar with the individual case to report them in narrative style.

For obvious reasons all identification marks such as name, initials of patients,

dates, etc., have been omitted. The authenticity of any of the presented facts may be established at any time through our office.

The success of our department of forensic medicine depends primarily on an adequate supply of material for our pages. Any article dealing with a subject properly in the field of forensic medicine and of interest to surgeons will be welcome and will receive, if requested, the combined interest and efforts of our editorial staff in its preparation for publication.

Expression of approval or criticism in our conduct of this department will be gratefully received by the editors and publishers.

HARRISON S. MARTLAND

