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HAS PHARMACOLOGY A PLACE IN TODAY'S MEDICAL SCHOOLS?

I have read with great interest Professor Schnieden's letter in the February issue of the British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology (Schnieden, 1976). One problem which is likely to arise from the extension of the creation of Chairs in clinical pharmacology is mentioned by Professor Schnieden, but is a matter which deserves further emphasis. The basic education of most clinical pharmacologists today is a training in medicine, initially not dissimilar from that of the specialist physician. His interest is therefore inevitably in the drugs used by those in this specialty. The discipline of pharmacology however, covers a much wider field and an education in medicine using the word in its narrowest sense is little help to understanding the problems of those in other fields of medical work. Two disciplines which have need for a pharmacological basis at the moment are ophthalmology and anaesthesia. It requires a clinical pharmacologist with special education in these fields, effectively to communicate to medical

students the pharmacological basis of the practice of these specialties and to visualize the possibility of profitable fields of research. To take two simple examples in my own specialty, the elucidation of the action of muscle relaxant drugs and the effects of anaesthetics on the central nervous system still merit much further investigation. No doubt similar arguments could be advanced in other fields, like psychiatry, ophthalmology, and perhaps dentistry also.

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