Looking back

BERNARD SCHLESINGER

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In 1924 when I was house physician to Frederic Still, Robert Hutchinson, and Hugh Thursfield at The Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street, the wards were large and cheerful with a warming stove in the centre. Beds were occupied by children from infancy up to age 14 years although boys tended to be somewhat younger. Cross-infection was easy and the outbreak of one of the exanthemata meant temporary closure of that part of the hospital; there were many cases of acute rheumatism, particularly chorea with attendant quite serious cardiac complications; gastroenteritis was common and with the introduction of Bateman's needle, early and successful attempts at intravenous rehydration were carried out.

Some of the wards had balconies, and provided the children were suitably clad, open air treatment appeared to be beneficial even in the winter.

Sisters slept in quarters immediately adjoining the wards which meant that they were closely in touch, although interference with complete 'off duty' time was a disadvantage.

A houseman could have the care of three large wards, and examining and treating so many sick children in preparation for his chief's visits presented quite a problem; it was also his duty to administer anaesthetics for emergency operations.

There was only one medical registrar, who was also the ward pathologist. Thus life was a continuously busy round and although at the end of 6 months the doctor in charge had considerably increased his paediatric knowledge he was ready for a more leisurely post which would allow him time to think and benefit from past experience.

Dr Bernard Schlesinger recently celebrated his 85th birthday. He is the only surviving founder member of the British Paediatric Association and one of the most regular supporters and attenders of its meetings.

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