

EDITORIAL

WITH this number the Aero Medical Society Journal enters a new era, since its publication has now been taken over by the Air Force School of Aviation Medicine.

In the last few years some progress has been made in India in the study and advancement of Aviation Medicine. Elsewhere the progress in this field has been phenomenal. In 1961 man crossed the frontiers of space, and both Russia and America hope to put man on the moon by 1970, if not earlier. This has been made possible not only by tremendous progress in the fields of rocket technology and electronics, but also by a remarkable advance in Aerospace Medicine, which has made it possible to equip and to train man to face new stresses and strange environments, and to ensure that all characteristics of the machine are kept within man's limitations. This advance has been achieved by wide national support and combined participation of civil and service institutions in the programme of Aerospace Medicine. Compared with this background our progress has been slow—a snail's pace—but steady. Since the resources at our disposal cannot be compared with those of the above mentioned countries, we must concede that this comparison is incorrect. It would, however, be more appropriate to compare the progress of Aviation Medicine in India with the progress, in recent years, of other sciences in the country. Even, when viewed in this light, the progress is slow. Most other disciplines of medicine and general science in India have attained self-sufficiency or at least are very near it; Aviation Medicine is still in its infancy. The main interest in Aviation Medicine in this country is restricted solely to the arms of the defence services concerned with flying, *i.e.*, the Air Force and the Navy. Time has now come when this interest should spread to various other institutions and to universities, so that they also may actively contribute towards its development. The School of Aviation Medicine established in 1957 still has a long way to go before it can make a notable contribution. If Aerospace Medicine is to substantially contribute to the aeronautical industry and also to civil aviation in India, then this institution should progress in parallel with other research and aeronautical institutions, so that it may be capable of eventually fulfilling the role of a national laboratory in Aerospace Medicine. It is only with proper

organisation, planned development and wide national participation, that can hope to attain self-sufficiency in this field.

In this number a talk entitled "The Role of the Air Force Medical Officers in the Flying Safety Programme" by Gp. Capt. N. K. Shitole, Director of Flying Safety, Air Headquarters, delivered at the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Society, is reported. It once again emphasises the need for all Medical Officers at flying stations to associate themselves intimately with aircrew, and to familiarise themselves thoroughly with aircrew and equipment in use. The administration must provide the Medical Officer with opportunities to carry out these duties, and the Medical Officer must conscientiously avail of them, and actively contribute to the Flying Safety programme of his station.

This number also contains the report on a project undertaken to determine the dimensions of a standard fighter cockpit for the I.A.F. This represents the initial stage in the evolution of a fighter cockpit based on measurements suited to Indian pilots. It therefore contains much that is of interest to those engaged in the indigenous design and manufacture of aircraft.

The medical evaluation of an aircraft is generally and briefly reviewed. This article is meant to serve a twofold purpose: firstly, that it may serve as a guide to the Medical Officer, who may be confronted with this problem, and secondly, that it may also help to educate those who are not fully aware that evaluation of an aircraft has also a medical aspect. A case is reported of a leaky inspiratory valve of an oxygen mask causing an incident in the air, which might have resulted in graver consequences. This forcibly illustrates the need for a thorough aero-medical indoctrination of aircrew and aero-medical training for all Air Force Medical Officers.

It is our intention to publish, besides purely scientific papers, articles of a more general and informative nature which Medical Officers may find instructive and useful in carrying out their responsibilities with respect to the care of aircrew. To all others interested in the progress of aviation in India, it is hoped that the Journal will provide an appreciative understanding of the medical view-point.
