

History of The Thyroid Club and the development of Thyroidology

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Before WW2 goitre and hyperthyroidism were diagnosed clinically in the UK. There were no direct estimations of thyroid hormones so that hypothyroidism was only recognised when the signs were obvious. However, good clinical descriptions were given in late 19c by Gull and Ord and treatment with extract of sheep thyroid was first performed by Murray. In the first half of the 20c surgery of the thyroid became a much safer procedure although antithyroid drugs were not available till post WW2. Iodine deficiency was noted as a cause of goitre in a large MRC survey in 1922. The Thyroid Club was formed as a dining club in 1950 by 16 London based clinicians and clinical investigators. Dinners with a post prandial talk were held 2-3 times per year. Initial founders included Sir Thomas Dunhill, Lord Brain, Sir Eric Pochin and Dr Raymond Greene. The membership was London based and exclusive. Eventually thyroidologists from the provinces were admitted but the total number of members did not exceed 54. A notable feature were visits by eminent thyroid investigators from USA such as Dr Howard Means and Dr Sydney Ingbar and others... The atmosphere at the meetings was informal, highly intellectual and collegiate. In the 1980s these meetings ceased and The British Thyroid Association was formed which has an annual meeting in London. Currently there are several thyroid research groups in UK and substantial clinical and basic research is being undertaken. A new generation of thyroidologists is taking the subject forward in the 21st century.