

**ANNUAL MEETING, 1979**  
**An Invitation to Trainees and Young Psychiatrists**

You are invited to give a 10-minute paper at the Annual General Meeting of the College in Exeter on 10–13 July 1979. There will be one or two special sessions at which anyone below the rank of consultant can speak; abstracts of the papers may later appear in the *Journal* or *Bulletin*.

The subject of a paper should be some investigation the speaker has undertaken, or is in process of carrying out, whether as part of his routine duties or not and whether funded or not. It could deal with some clinical observation or could be experimental and part of either clinical or laboratory research. An unusual case might be acceptable if well worked out and presenting some point of novelty. A historical note would likewise be possible. Clinical trial of a new drug or some variant of existing therapy, pathological observations, or a genetic or epidemiological study would be considered, but papers dealing only with method or with speculative hypothesis would in general not be accepted.

Intending speakers should offer a title and an abstract of up to 250 words (or a script of the full paper) by 1 May 1979, when the organisers will select and notify those chosen. This is to allow time for the accepted papers to be printed by title for circulation to members of the College beforehand. Offers from Registrars in non-academic units will be particularly welcome.

Please bring this notice to the attention to any of your colleagues who may be interested.

Communicate with Miss Jane Boyce at the College.

JULIAN BIRD  
JOHN CRAMMER  
GRAHAM LUCAS  
ANDREW SIMS

*(on behalf of the Research  
Committee and the Programmes and  
Meetings Committee)*

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**REPORTS AND PAMPHLETS**

**Public Relations in Psychiatry**, edited by M. T. HASLAM. Society of Clinical Psychiatrists, 1976. 28 pages.

This publication represents the work of a small study group under the chairmanship of the Editor set up to inquire into the problems of public relations in psychiatry and to 'give guidelines towards improving what is at present an unsatisfactory position'. The booklet, which is 'dated 1976' became available in the summer of 1978.

The group obtained opinions from people concerned with the BBC, with the Independent Broadcasting Association, with the Newspaper Publishers' Association and other newspaper interests including the Press Council, with TV authorities, with the Bar Association, with the Royal Society of Health, with the Editor of *World Medicine*, with the Director of MIND and with three doctors.

There are sections on the Courts and Legal Profession, on the Reactions of Colleagues, on the Reaction of Mass Media and on the Reactions of the General Public plus a section given over to the Editor of *World Medicine*, and the Director of MIND.

A discussion is followed by recommendations. This section proposes the establishment of a standing committee set up through the Royal College of Psychiatrists to maintain liaison with the Bar and to be accessible to the press through a public relations officer. The SCP also recommends that 'consideration should be given to the training of psychiatrists in the writing of reports to Courts and to developing an understanding of related disciplines in the legal and social science areas'.

Whether we should compete with such organizations as the National Association for Mental Health in commenting on 'hot' issues and whether the appointment of a PRO or a Press Officer would help in this remains a question for further discussion. At present the President, the Registrar and the Dean, by virtue of their offices, act as official spokesmen of the College on all matters, whatever their degree of urgency or gravity. The recent issue of the White Paper on reform of the Mental Health Act demonstrates how politically orientated organizations are in a position to react swiftly, whilst the College must await the result of mature

professional discussion. It is difficult to see how a PRO would be able to alter this state of affairs. If, however, the College has aims or objects which it wishes to achieve, Dr David Clark suggests that these might be defined and advice on procedure be sought from Public Relations Consultants. Such an approach is likely to cost a great deal of money.

Dr Haslam and his group have put a lot of hard

work into seeking solutions to these problems, but the result of their labours adds little to the Memorandum produced in 1972 by the College's Public Policy Committee, or to Dr Clark's Memorandum to the PPC in 1974. The dilemmas remain unresolved.

DONAL F. EARLY

## CORRESPONDENCE

### THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD PSYCHIATRIST

DEAR SIR,

Re Sir Denis Hill's lecture<sup>(1)</sup>: the book<sup>(2)</sup> he quoted was written in the belief that if you cannot beat them or join them it is best to co-operate with them. If doctors always insist on being the leaders in a group, can they expect other professions to accept this and give full co-operation?<sup>(3)</sup>

ALEX BAKER

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### References

- HILL, Sir Denis (1978) The qualities of a good psychiatrist. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, **133**, 97-104.
- BAKER, A. A. (Ed.) *Comprehensive Psychiatric Care*. Blackwell, 1976.
- The consultant, one who consults (an oracle). *Bulletin of the Royal College of Psychiatrists*, June 1978, pp 110-1.

## NATIONAL MARRIAGE GUIDANCE COUNCIL

### Marital Sexual Dysfunction Project

The DHSS has notified us of a project which is being funded by the Department to train marriage guidance counsellors in the treatment of certain sexual problems. In 1974 it was agreed to fund an experimental study to examine:

- i. The feasibility of providing a training programme for marriage guidance counsellors to enable them to treat sexual dysfunction using non-counselling special treatment methods without undermining their existing skill in counselling;
- ii. the feasibility of staffing a co-therapy service without having a highly professionally qualified person as one of the co-therapists, and (as a further development) the feasibility of staffing the service with single 'non professional' therapists.

Following an evaluation of the Study, NMGC has been given financial support for a further three years to develop and extend this training. The main aims of the present project are:

The continuation of apprenticeship training. In the first year of the NMGC's 'apprenticeship training' the trainer acted as senior co-therapist and the trainee as junior co-therapist in treatments based at Herbert Gray College in Rugby. In the next year, the erstwhile trainee acted as trainer and senior co-therapist, with a new trainee, at the new trainer's own MGC. These cycles are planned to repeat themselves annually, so spreading training gradually outwards from Rugby.

At this stage in the project the number of people who can be offered treatment at each centre is quite small, and outside the Midlands treatment is available at only a few MGCs (see list following). However, treatment will start in several more in the second year of the project.

The NMGC recognize the importance of developing and maintaining links with doctors and NHS services providing advice and treatment for sexual problems.