

I had a satisfactory training in psychiatry at a well-known psychiatric postgraduate establishment and I held the MRCPsych. Shortly after my appointment I applied for approval under Section 28 (2), only to be told six weeks later that my application had been rejected without reason given. However, I was asked to reapply immediately and this time after a short delay I learnt that my luck was in.

My reason for writing to you is to highlight what seems to me to be an arbitrary process, and one which is open to the sorts of abuse to which Dr Hutchinson has drawn attention.

GREGOR WILKINSON

*King's College Hospital
London, SE5 9RS*

Contributions requested

DEAR SIR,

Faculty News, the newspaper of North and West London Faculty of the Royal College of General Practitioners, would welcome news items as well as short articles and letters from GPs and specialists in other disciplines.

Contributions should be sent to the Editor, Dr B. A. Qureshi, 32 Legerace Avenue, Hounslow West, Middlesex TW4 7RS.

BASHIR QURESHI

Middlesex, TW4 7RS

News Items

Examples of Medical Audit—2

We talk about 'informed consent' and ask patients to sign forms implying they agree to have ECT (or anaesthetics or surgery). But do they really know what they are doing? Workers at the University of Pittsburgh conducted a 13-month study of 57 patients (out of a total of 82 for whom ECT was proposed in that time) to assess their understanding of the nature, risks and potential benefits of the treatment after it had supposedly been discussed with them by their doctor. This was done in two ways. At the time they signed consent they were given an easily read 15-item questionnaire to answer over the next two days with or without help, and later a 50-minute taped interview assessing both mental state and answers to specific questions about consent and the 15-item questionnaire (see *Psychiatric News*, 18 July 1980, pp 1, 11, 30). A few could not list correctly any of the risks, and 20 per cent said they did not know how to stop or withdraw from treatment once it had started. About 1 in 4 of the patients was judged to be incapable through illness of making a balanced rational decision for or against treatment, but it was noted that those who refused consent had less knowledge and understanding of the treatment than those who accepted. 'The problem of informed consent ... is a fundamental problem (of) effectiveness of human communications.'

Senior Psychiatrists needed in Australia

The University of Newcastle, New South Wales, is currently involved in developing psychiatric services within the Hunter Region, and providing both undergraduate and postgraduate teaching in psychiatry with the Newcastle Medical

School and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists. One problem has been the difficulty in recruiting adequate senior clinical staff for one of the major psychiatric hospitals within the Region. This hospital is sited on the shores of Lake Macquarie and though somewhat isolated is now beginning to open up. The principal work at the hospital would involve supervising and training psychiatric trainees.

Any senior psychiatrist who, possibly at the time of retirement, might be interested in spending 6 or 12 months working in Australia is welcome to write to Beverley Raphael, Professor of Psychiatry, The University of Newcastle, New South Wales 2308, Australia.

Exchange of Professional Position

Dr Gerard Mallon, Head of Department of St Martha's Hospital at Antigonish, Nova Scotia, is interested in contacting a British psychiatrist who may wish to consider an exchange of professional positions for one year. The most simple arrangement would be to exchange both jobs and homes. Ideally the time of exchange would include the school year.

The Department of Psychiatry at St Martha's Hospital is mainly an out-patient and in-patient consultation service. Clinical staff consist of two psychiatrists, two social workers, two psychologists and one clinical nursing specialist. Dr Mallon is interested in a locum consultative post in the NHS.

Anyone interested should contact Dr Mallon at the Department of Psychiatry, St Martha's Hospital, PO Box 1417, Antigonish, NS, B2G 2L7.