history of depressive illness severe enough to be treated by psychiatrists, with two suicides. Two respondents had manic depressive relatives. Few respondents thought that any link existed between talent and mental illness. Many tried to distinguish between 'operator skill' and talent, rightly pointing out our inability to separate these qualities.

Though we can say that family studies of acclaimed artists should provide valid information on the linkage, if any, between talent and mental disorder, such studies may be particularly difficult to perform on populations large enough to make statistical sense. Questionnaires may be poorly tolerated by this population, and careful personal interviews would seem necessary to contact the target population adequately. Until such studies, we might return to our own creative speculation about protective genes, over-inclusive thinking, self-therapy, etc and our anecdotes of Schumann and Van Gogh.

A. EL-SOBKY
T. O'GRADY

Carlton Hayes Hosptial
Narborough, Leicester

How to get the senior registrar post you want

DEAR SIRS

Guinevere Tufnell's article (*Bulletin*, November 1984, **8**, 214–216) concerning interviews and the preparation for them makes many relevant and eminently sensible suggestions. However, there is one major area left uncovered, namely medical politics and organization.

No aspiring senior registrar or consultant can nowadays attend for interview without having a good basic knowledge of recent medico-political reports and events. Trying to keep abreast of the latest comments and political undertones of Short, Griffiths, Ethics, College edicts, etc can be time consuming (and uninspiring for those who are uninterested in politics).

To overcome these problems our department has had an 'Interview Package' in existence for over a year. This file is divided into two main sections. The first, so well covered by Dr Tufnell, concerns the candidates own curriculum vitae, its content, presentation and anticipated questions. The second part deals with medical politics. It contains a copy of all major reports and relevant recommendations from recent years together with a précis and comment on each one. As candidates use the file they update it according to recent events. We have found this to be a useful educational tool for medico-politics and one that saves candidates many wasted hours in the library.

Further details are available from the author: Shackleton

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S. LINTER

Southampton

'Magnet'—Sharing computer experience in psychiatry

DEAR SIRS

Quite a few psychiatrists are exploring the use of microcomputers in their own work. They are writing programs for such applications as teaching, record keeping, diagnosis, testing and history taking. It is early days and so far it is not easy to justify the usefulness of microcomputers in psychiatry. The main reason is that programs are not widely available yet. I think it would be helpful if we could share our knowledge and experience of computer use, and this is what I am proposing here—a 'magnetic magazine network' to enable users of the BBC micro to exchange ideas and programs on psychiatry. The BBC machine is chosen as it is still reckoned to be the best home computer and it is quite widely used in academic circles.

The use of flexible magnetic discs as a storage medium opens up a very cheap way of publishing information. Copies can be made very simply and the discs reused indefinitely. This is what should be done by readers who want to join in: Send me a 5¼" disc, either blank or with your contribution on—state 40 or 80 tracks. The disc should be packed in a container suitable for reuse and a self-addressed and stamped label included. I will then make a master disc of the contributions and send your disc back with the full copy on it.

Contributions could include letters and descriptive accounts of your experiences (as disc text files), or programs. News of applications or software you know about would be of interest. It is not intended to exchange any copyrighted material.

To start off this exchange I am offering a program called 'Phenomenology'. It is designed as a teaching aid for students of psychiatry. It contains 75 examples of reported speech of psychiatric patients and 59 psychiatric phenomena with their definitions. The task is to match these. The program also asks questions on diagnostic significance of the phenomena in nine common conditions. There are thus 750 questions in all. There is a running total score and also a high score competition which keeps the name of the highest scorer for presentation when the program is next used.

Please write to Dr T. F. Packer, 17 Lily Crescent, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 2SP.

T. F. PACKER

Newcastle upon Tyne

Computers in Psychiatry Group

In 1983 a notice appeared in the *Bulletin* (August 1983, **7**, 156) proposing the formation of a Computers in Psychiatry Group, and asked members to write if they were interested in joining such a group. The task of the organization of this group has now been transferred. Would any members who are interested in such a group, and who have not already made known their interest, please contact Dr R. N. Bloor, RAF Hospital Ely, Cambridge CB6 1DN.