

handicap the assessment of incapacity should present little difficulty. Cases of alcoholism, functional and personality disorders may present more difficulty, and assessment may depend on the individual doctor's interpretation of mental disorder. However, it appears that the Court tends towards the view that these conditions render a person liable to its jurisdiction where there appears a real danger that they will lead to dissipation of considerable capital assets.

8. The Court's procedure requires that a patient is served with notice of the proposed proceedings for the appointment of a Receiver and this is a task often undertaken by the certifying doctor. The Court attaches considerable importance to such service since the patient may have an objection, though irrational, to the appointment of a particular person or may, even unwittingly, contribute information of assistance to the Court. The Court has power under its Rules to dispense with service where it is satisfied (a) that the patient is incapable of understanding the notice, (b) that service would be injurious to his health, or (c) that for any other reason service ought to be dispensed with. However, the Court is reluctant to dispense with service as it is considered that a person has a right to know—or, at least be given an opportunity to

understand—if the management of his affairs is to be taken out of his hands and thereafter dealt with by someone on his behalf; if he has no understanding at all, then service cannot affect him adversely and a patient who has sufficient insight to appreciate the significance of the Court's proceedings may need reassurance that they are for his benefit.

9. The prime responsibility for a patient's welfare rests with his family (of which the Receiver is usually a member) and his general practitioner or a consultant. The concern of the Lord Chancellor's Medical Visitors for a patient's welfare stems from the Court's responsibility for the management of the patient's property and affairs. The Visitors' prime function is to inform the Court so that it may meet its responsibilities. Due to the burden of work falling on them, the Medical Visitors visit only those patients who are cared for in their own homes or in nursing homes—and in many cases, upon one occasion only. When a patient is in hospital and likely to require such continuing type of care, it is regarded as the consultant's responsibility to see that the Court is informed, for example, where the patient could benefit from private care or from a course of treatment or some physical aid which may be provided if private funds are available.

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### ***Symposium on Research into the Health and Social Consequences of Unemployment***

There has been growing concern among members of the College about the possible effects on health of rising unemployment; the Research Committee has been considering this and in particular has been exploring the possibility of encouraging further research in this field. Members of the Committee felt that on the whole general practitioners would be likely to see those affected in far greater numbers than psychiatrists. The Research Committee therefore organized a small symposium and invited representatives of the Social and Community Psychiatry Section and of the Research Division of the Royal College of General Practitioners to join it. The symposium was held at the College on 15 October 1982.

Following an introduction by the Chairman of the Research Committee, Professor Andrew Sims, Dr Sheila Mann gave a brief account of some previous work in this field, and the conclusions that might be drawn. Professor David Metcalfe (Department of General Practice, University of Manchester) then described a large study of urban primary care which he is presently undertaking. It has been possible to look at some aspects of unemployed people from this study, although it was not designed to do so.

A lively discussion followed with all participants taking part. Although the difficulties of undertaking research in this field were acknowledged, and the importance of defining parameters accurately stressed, there was agreement that there was considerable need to undertake further research and great enthusiasm to explore how to do so further. A number of approaches were suggested in greater or lesser detail and at the conclusion, it was agreed to form a small working group with representation from those at the symposium with the intention of examining further the possibility of research in this field.

We are aware that many initiatives have been started in recent months and that there is no central pool of information on these. Members of the working group would therefore be pleased to hear from College members who have or are undertaking work in this field, or who know of other projects recently set up, or who have useful suggestions that could be considered. Please send any such comments *in writing* to the Secretary of the Research Committee.

SHEILA A. MANN  
*Secretary, Research Committee*