

**Medical Care in Three Psychiatric Hostels, Hampstead and Bloomsbury District Health Authority.**

By Elizabeth Horder. 1990. Pp. 28. Produced by Hampstead and South Barnet GP Forum and the Hampstead Department of Community Medicine.

The mental hospital closure programme is well advanced. Thirty hospitals have been closed and 100,000 long-stay patients have been discharged. Four thousand patients have found homes in various local authority or voluntary association homes. These patients need long-term psychiatric care but they also have social needs and a higher than average level of serious medical morbidity. What is the best way in which these can be met? Elizabeth Horder has undertaken an important study to compare and assess three different models for providing long-term care to this group of patient.

The hostels she studied contained chronic schizophrenic patients staffed by trained psychiatric nurses and care assistants. Three patterns of care were identified. In one, a GP shared the care with a community psychiatrist, the former dealing with 'physical' problems, and the latter with the mental illness. In another hostel, although patients were registered with local GPs in four different practices, it was the consultant psychiatrist who dealt with all the physical and mental problems. In the third hostel two practices were involved, and residents consulted as ordinary NHS patients. Although the GPs met all the physical and medical needs, a community psychiatrist did have contact with the residents of this hostel.

Three models of care were studied. The first, shared care, worked well but there were problems in communication and in defining areas of responsibility. In the second pattern most of the care was provided by the psychiatrist. This model seemed more akin to that of an institution than to that of community care, but it was simple for the staff. The third model was closest to the normal pattern of NHS care but problems in communication and

defining areas of responsibility still persisted. Perhaps some of these problems could have been overcome had the patient held shared care records been used (Essex *et al*, 1990).

In all three models there was a considerable commitment of time from a psychiatrist. Mrs Horder questions whether this is necessary or justified when GPs are available, when the problems that these doctors will be asked to deal with are similar to those presenting every day in their practices, and when there is such a high level of support by trained hostel staff, who deal with most of the problems themselves. None of the GPs felt these patients made excessive demands nor did they find the work difficult.

A fourth model is suggested in which a GP medical officer is attached to each hostel. This would provide continuity, accessibility, familiarity and total cover. This model moves away from an institutional pattern towards a community based one.

GPs are already looking after many people with mental illness who are living independent lives in the community, but should they also take responsibility for those in residential care? If so, should extra remuneration be provided? Should GPs be able to arrange short term crisis admissions to community beds, so that admission to hospital can be avoided? The conclusions of this study are that GPs find such work interesting and valuable even though most did not have a special interest in psychiatry.

This is an important study which should be of value to all purchasers interested in selecting the most cost-effective ways to meet the long term medical needs of mentally ill patients living in hostels in the community.

BEN ESSEX

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26 Holmshaw Close, London SE26 4TG*

*Reference*

ESSEX, B., DOIG, R.R. & RENSHAW, J. (1990) Pilot study of records of shared care for people with mental illness. *British Medical Journal*, **300**, 1442-446.

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## Miscellany

### Annette Award

The Schizophrenia Association of Great Britain offers a prize annually known as the Annette Award, for research in the field of schizophrenia. In 1992 the award will be of £500. It will be offered for an

account, not exceeding 5000 words, of an original piece of research. The aim of the award is, to encourage and reward young researchers in university departments, research units and hospitals within the United Kingdom working in the fields of psychiatry, the neuro-sciences, biology or allied disciplines.

Further details from the International Schizophrenia Centre, The Crescent, Bangor, LL57 2AG.

Last year's award was made to Dr Sunjai Gupta, Honorary Lecturer at the Institute of Psychiatry, London, for his paper on the possible effects of climate and weather on the onset of psychotic illnesses.

#### New national clinical centre

St Thomas' and Guy's Hospitals are to collaborate to open Britain's first Clinical PET (Positron Emission Tomography) Centre for the early diagnosis of a number of diseases including cancer, heart disease, Alzheimer's disease and epilepsy, and have launched an associated fund-raising campaign.

#### A new association of Bulgarian psychiatrists

In November 1991 an Initiative Committee was set up at the Sixth Congress of Bulgarian Psychiatrists in Sofia to prepare the ground for a new, independent professional organisation of Bulgarian psychiatrists. It was recognised that there was pressing need for a rapid change in the organisation and practice of psychiatry, on the build-up of a new professional identity and new professional organisations, and innovation in education and training. It was felt that the great majority of Bulgarian psychiatrists wished for a closer integration in, and intensive collaboration with, the world psychiatric community.

#### New publications

*Homelessness and Mental Illness: the dark side of community care*, edited by M. R. Page and R. B. Powell, is available from Concern, 52 Friern Barnet Road, London N11 3BP (£3.95, including postage and packing).

*Old Age: a register of social research 1985-90*, edited by Gillian Crosby, is available price £18. Further information: Centre for Policy on Ageing, 25-31 Ironmonger Row, London EC1V 3QP (telephone 071 253 1787).

The following King's Fund publications are now available: *Making it Happen - Employment opportunities for people with severe learning difficulties*; *Supporting Self-Advocacy: Service Evaluation by People with Learning Difficulties*; *Is Race on your Agenda? Enabling Community Integration*. Further information: King's Fund Centre, 126 Albert Street, London NW1 7NF (telephone 071 267 6111; fax 071 267 6108).

*Positive Thinking for Mental Health* is available from: The Administrator, BMGH, The Playtower, Ladywell Road, London SE13 7UW (£3, plus 50p postage and packing; cheques should be made payable to Black Mental Health Group).

*Moving to the Dance - or - Service Culture and Community Care* is available from VIA Publications, 5 Kentings, Comberton, Cambridge CB3 7DT (£8.95 plus postage and packing - £1 for orders up to £15, £2.50 above).

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## Forthcoming events

The **First European Symposium on ECT** entitled 'Critical History - Future Trends' will be held in Graz, Austria from 26-29 March 1992. Further information: Congress Secretariat, Psychiatrische Universitätsklinik Graz, A-8036 Graz, Auenbruggerplatz 22, Austria (telephone 43 316 385 36 16; fax 43 316 35 5 20).

**Ethics and Psychiatry**, an international conference of the Romanian Free Psychiatrists' Association, will take place in Bucharest from 2-4 October 1992. Further information: Secretariat, APLR Conference 1992, Grupul Pentru Dialog Social, 120 Calea Victoriei, Sector 1 Bucharest, Romania (fax 0400 14 14 71; 0400 14 15 25).

A conference entitled **The Brain Damaged Patient: Recent Advances in Pathogenesis and Treatment** will

be held on 27 and 28 April 1992. Further information: Mrs Lee Wilding, Conference Office, Institute of Psychiatry, De Crespigny Park, London SE5 8AF (telephone 071 703 5411, extension 3170; fax 071 703 5796).

**Gender Identity and Development in Childhood and Adolescence**: a two day international conference will be held on 13 and 14 March 1992 at St George's Hospital, London. Fee: £160. Further information and application forms: Philippa Weitz, Conference Unit, Department of Mental Health Sciences, St George's Hospital Medical School, Cranmer Terrace, London SW17 0RE (telephone 081 672 9944, extension 55534; fax 081 767 4696).

The **2nd International Conference on Children and Death** will be held at the University of Edinburgh