

abuse referred to figures for drug offences and the number of Iranian nationals involved. In 1978 there were 83 prosecutions concerning the supply of heroin, and a total of over 14,463 prosecutions for all drug offences, but very few Iranians were involved.

Patients' voting rights

On 2 July Mr Barry Shurman sought and obtained leave to bring in a Bill to amend the law disenfranchising patients resident in psychiatric hospitals. He pointed out the anomalies in the present law—patients with the same mental condition were granted or refused the vote according to whether or not they still possessed a home address, or according to whether they were being treated in a unit of a general hospital or in a psychiatric hospital. He hoped the Bill would receive the Government's favour.

Miscellaneous

On 25 March Sir G. Young replied to questions from Mrs Renée Short on the subject of *Huntington's Chorea*. Mrs Short had suggested screening tests for pregnant women at risk, but Sir George pointed out that no such tests existed.

On 1 July Mr van Straubenzee questioned Mr Jenkin about the Government's grant to MIND, and brought out the fact that Mr Tony Smythe had apologized for the way he

had prosecuted his accusations against the staff of Broadmoor. Mr Jenkin said that bodies that accepted public money should act responsibly and not fling wild charges, but that the Government would not use the power of the purse to muzzle critics.

The Government will not ban the use of *hypnosis* by unqualified persons, nor undertake to study the dangers of hyperventilation and hypnosis as practised at meetings of the 'Exegesis Programme'. The ban on the entry of foreign scientologists entering the country has now been revoked.

Addenda

Sir George Young stated on 31 July that savings resulting from the restructuring of the Health Service would be available for redeployment on patient care.

Concern about the use of pornographic films was again shown in the form of questions about the qualifications of staff in the psychology department of two of the Special Hospitals (6 August).

A series of nine questions by Mr J. Ashley on the prevention and treatment of *Huntington's Chorea* appears in Hansard for 7 August, but the reply was being sent privately.

ALEXANDER WALK

A Symposium on Psychiatric Research

By JAMES CRAIG, Western General Hospital, Edinburgh

A Symposium on Research Methods was held under the auspices of the Research and Clinical Section of the Scottish Division of the College at Gartnavel Royal Hospital, Glasgow, on 30 and 31 May. Dr A. M. Shenkin opened the proceedings with a short, moving tribute to our late Chairman, Dr Astor Sclare, who did so much to stimulate ideas for research in Scotland.

'Selecting and Starting a Research Topic' by Dr Norman Kreitman provided useful advice to beginners in research and those in a position to guide them. He pointed out the value of traditional clinical research and believed common sense was more important than statistics. 'What are the clinical problems?' is a good question to ask before premature immersion in the literature. These and other principles were outlined with many illuminating illustrations.

'Ethical Aspects of Research' were pursued by Professor R. E. Kendell who, after a review of the history of medical ethics, elaborated on two basic ethical principles in psychiatry, namely (a) the subject must understand the

implication of the research and give 'free and informed consent' and (b) the subject must not be exposed to hazard. The constitution and function of Ethics Committees were outlined. They help prevent enthusiasts acting unethically mainly by their presence and the climate of opinion which has produced them rather than by their actual decisions. In conclusion Professor Kendell suggested a useful rule of thumb in assessing the ethical acceptability of a research proposal: to ask the question 'would I allow this to be carried out on my parent, spouse or child?'

'Single Case Study Methods' were broached by Dr Alistair E. Philip. He likened drug trials to the formal post-renaissance garden, beautiful in their perfect symmetry but not having much in common with every-day life, unlike single case study methods which enable many more data to be included. He gave the example of his own paper published in 1969. 'A Method for Analysing Assessments of Symptom Change', in which he made the basic assumption that the items in a rating scale such as the Hamilton were

included because their clinical relevance was clear. By looking at each item *per se* rather than global scores, finer quality results could be produced with fewer patients than was possible with the usual drug trial.

Dr Jonathan Chick posed the question 'Can Craftsmen Blame their Tools?' Good craftsmen make their own tools, he suggested. He then discussed problems in developing research instruments such as a standardized interview; frequency, severity, duration and the importance of a time frame were considered. Aspects of reliability, validity, the use of video tapes, questionnaires, and the role of experimenter expectancy were other important matters about which Dr Chick gave useful guidance.

The 'Design of Drug Trials' was lucidly outlined by Dr David Gough; in particular he detailed factors influencing the design of prospective drug trials. He concluded with useful rules: a few simple and precise objectives, end-point measurements, more patients rather than less, a reasonable follow-up, conducting the trial within the capability of one's organization, and seeking advice early, especially from a statistician and from the drug manufacturer.

Dr Nicol Ferrier reviewed the 'Use of Laboratory Techniques and Animal Methods'. Current research using these techniques is at present mainly concerned with the study of neurohumeral transmission and its relation to the functional psychoses. The implications of the various neurohumeral hypotheses of schizophrenia from the research viewpoint were described in some detail, with the various techniques that have been developed to try to clarify them. The development of new techniques themselves also opens up new areas of research and the development of new hypotheses; examples include high performance liquid chromatography, drug level studies, and the measurement of various pituitary hormones.

On the second day Mr Peter Harvey spoke with great clarity and interest about 'Data Organization and Analysis'. Like other speakers he strongly advised the researcher not to be overawed by statistics. Their use in summarizing and

describing data and in helping to make decisions was outlined. Nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio data were defined, and the types of statistics useful to deal with these different forms of data were discussed. Mr Harvey recommended Siegel's book on *Non-parametric Statistics*, and he concluded by emphasizing the distinction between statistical, clinical and scientific significance.

Dr W. I. Fraser in his talk on 'Topics of Research in Mental Handicap', emphasized the scope and potential for the solitary researcher in this field, unlike so many others in medicine. The establishment of a Chair in Mental Handicap at St. George's, the initiative of the Chief Scientist in Scotland, and the DHSS's plans all indicate an increasing emphasis being given to research in mental handicap. He advised that educational and cognitive fields should not be entered into by psychiatrists, but other areas such as psycholinguistics were transdisciplinary, clinically productive and exciting. He then reviewed the many areas in mental handicap where more research is required, e.g. non-verbal behaviour, proneness of the mentally handicapped to dementia, study of attachment theory, bereavement and effects of other life events, reproductive biology and sociology and the need for adequate drug trials.

'Writing Papers and Theses' was fittingly the concluding talk for the Symposium given by Dr Philip Snaith. He gave useful advice, such as in writing the covering letter to editors. In writing the report itself the contributor should study the notes provided by most journals. An introduction should be brief and confined to the reasons for the research being undertaken. In the method section the question 'How was the study done?' should be answered. Various tips were given on writing the results and on the use of tables and figures. In the discussion section the following questions should be answered, 'What does the study mean, how do the findings fit in with those of others, and what does this lead to?'

Lively discussion followed the presentations and one hopes that research in Scotland has been stimulated.

Forthcoming Events

An Introductory Course in Family Therapy will be held over three terms on Monday afternoons, beginning 13 October, 1980, at the **Scottish Institute of Human Relations**. Information: Development Secretary, Scottish Institute of Human Relations, 56 Albany Street, Edinburgh EH13 3QR.

A joint meeting of the **British Medical Anthropology Society** and the **Edinburgh Transcultural Psychiatry Society** will be held on 15 November 1980 at the University of Edinburgh. The theme of the meeting will be 'The Place of Anthropology in Medical Education'. Information: Dr Una Maclean, Department of Community Medicine, Usher Institute, Warrender Park Road, Edinburgh, EH9 1DW.