

The College

Scottish Trainees' Day

JIM GALLAGHER, Southern General Hospital, Glasgow and PHILIP THOMAS, Royal Edinburgh Hospital

The first Scottish Trainees' Day was held at the Gartnavel Royal Hospital, Glasgow, on 26 June. It was organized by two Scottish representatives of the Collegiate Trainees Committee, and about 40 trainees attended and heard talks given by Professor Gerald Timbury, Dr Angus McKay, Dr John Cox, Dr S. P. Sashidharan, Dr Richard Williams and Dr Sue Philips, Secretary of the Collegiate Trainees Committee. In the afternoon the meeting broke into small groups to facilitate the expression of views over a wide range of issues. The plenary session at the end of the afternoon brought together the main themes discussed in the small groups and these are summarized below.

Although many issues were debated, the relationship between clinical tutor, trainee and College provided the most intense discussion. Whilst appreciating the difficulties faced by many tutors in executing their duty (such as lack of secretarial support, failure of Health Boards to recognize the importance of a tutor's job) it was felt by many that the College should play a more active role in selecting and supporting tutors. For example, approval of hospitals for training could be made contingent upon the satisfactory functioning of the tutor; it was also suggested that the College should produce a job description in an attempt to overcome some of the inconsistencies in standards. Approval visits were also considered; some people felt that insufficient warning was given, whereas others saw the Approval exercise as a waste of time because defects in training schemes were simply 'wallpapered' over and covered up. In general, however, most people were satisfied with Approval visits and thought that some improvements in training did result.

As might be expected, disquiet was expressed about the examinations. It was felt, for example, that the problem of candidates who repeatedly failed was a complex one, but one which required careful consideration. To some extent it seemed to indicate a shortcoming of the clinical tutor, who

should be more active in counselling trainees who had experienced or were likely to experience this difficulty. The lack of a syllabus was deplored, and it was also thought that more use could be made of continual assessment and of videotaped short cases. The CTC representatives' role was also discussed, and it was felt to be important that the representatives should endeavour to keep in regular contact with those they represented, both to inform and to seek opinion; a regular newsletter and more trainees' days could satisfy this need.

Many trainees expressed concern about the suggestion of restricted approval for peripheral hospitals, believing that this would reduce already parlous staffing levels and standards, and ultimately patient care. The apparent lack of interest shown by trainees from the North-East of Scotland aroused much debate, particularly as no nominations had been received from this area for recent CTC elections, and also in view of the poor attendance of trainees from this area at the meeting. It was suggested that direct contact should be established with trainees in Dundee and Aberdeen and that the next Trainees' Day might be held in one of these centres. Finally, the involvement of trainees in research was discussed, widely differing opinions being expressed; some felt that research was a waste of time for trainees, particularly under the pressure of examinations, whereas others viewed research experience as an essential and integral part of training.

A questionnaire was completed by all trainees attending the meeting, in an attempt to provide a more organized representation of their attitudes and experience of training. Although the results are not yet available, the summary given above provides an interesting preview of what is to come. The opportunity to meet and hear the views of a group of involved and committed trainees was a stimulating experience for the organizers and, we hope, for those who attended. The next Trainees' Day is eagerly awaited.

Examinations—Spring 1982

The next MRCPsych Examinations will take place on the following dates:

Preliminary Test: 3 February 1982. Closing date for receipt of entries—2 December 1981.

Membership Examination: 21 April 1982 (written papers); 26 to 29 April 1982 (clinicals and orals). Closing date for receipt of entries—17 February 1982.

The entry fees are £45 and £80 respectively. New regula-

tions concerning withdrawals and refunds will be applicable. Late or incomplete entries are not accepted. The College does not give exemption from any part of the examinations. Candidates are reminded that they must pass the Membership Examination within five years of passing the Preliminary Test.

Details and entry forms are available from the Examinations Secretary at the College.