



columns

number of thoughtful publications on the care and needs of these birds.

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Forensic telepsychiatry

We read the article by Jones *et al* on setting up a telepsychiatry service (*Psychiatric Bulletin*, December 2006, **30**, 464–467) with interest and optimism, having developed the first forensic telepsychiatry service in Nottinghamshire in 2005 (Saleem & Stankard, 2006). To date, we have undertaken 30 forensic assessments, 4 of which have resulted in hospital admissions. Assessments were primarily undertaken using existing video-link facilities within local magistrates' courts and HM prisons. Our experiences support the opinion that this saves time, cost (Zollo *et al*, 1999) and improves access to psychiatric services (Zaylor *et al*, 2000).

However, although Jones *et al* describe the development of services, they do not state whether they have assessed patients themselves using videoconferencing facilities. If they have, it would be useful to establish links between telepsychiatric services within the UK, forensic or otherwise.

At the College's invitation, we are conducting a workshop on this subject in Prague, at the Annual Meeting of the Forensic Faculty in February 2007. We have also developed a forensic telepsychiatric steering group, with a research sub-committee, in Nottingham. We are coordinating several research projects which are exploring the use of teleconferencing facilities within forensic psychiatry. We would welcome any

additional views and opinions on expanding this work.

It is crucial for services across the UK to share experiences and promote practices. The promotion of telepsychiatry has the potential to change current practice positively. This is particularly important if we are to succeed in delivering timely, easily accessible and clinically sound psychiatric services, with the additional spotlight on cost-efficiency with respect to health service delivery.

SALEEM, Y. & STANKARD, P. (2006) I'm only at the end of a videolink. *BMJ Career Focus*, **333**, 223.

ZAYLOR, C., WHITTEN, P. & KINGSLEY, C. (2000) Telemedicine services to a county jail. *Journal of Telemedicine and Telecare*, **6**, 93–95.

ZOLLO, S., KIENZLE, M., LOEFFELHOLZ, P., *et al* (1999) Telemedicine to IOWA's correctional facilities: initial clinical experience and assessment of program costs. *Telemedicine Journal*, **5**, 291–301.

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Mental healthcare for psychiatrists

We read the article by White *et al* (*Psychiatric Bulletin*, October 2006, **30**, 382–384) with great interest, as we have conducted a similar postal survey of 1640 general practitioners and psychiatrists in Devon and Cornwall regarding depression and stigma. We also achieved a high response rate (75%), indicating the importance of this issue to doctors. When we asked about sources of help respondents would turn to if they were

experiencing excessive stress, more reported that they would seek help from family and friends (95%) and from colleagues (65%). Our slightly different findings might be because we asked about 'stress' rather than 'mental illness', but the overall trends are similar.

The barriers to disclosing mental illness reported by White *et al* are supported by our findings. However, we found that barriers to seeking help very often included concerns about letting colleagues down and confidentiality, with concern about career progression cited by only 16% (although women were twice as concerned about this as men).

White *et al* found that 20% of psychiatrists admit to self-prescribing for mental illness, but in our study the rate was only 7%. The fact that our respondents were more willing to disclose stress to colleagues and reported less self-prescribing perhaps reflects a more open culture in Devon and Cornwall since the introduction of an effective occupational health service.

Overall, our study in the South-West confirms the findings of White *et al* in the West Midlands. Both studies address the poorly researched but important area of doctors' attitudes towards mental illness and we agree with the recommendations of White *et al*. There is still a long way to go in terms of educating doctors about looking after and improving their own mental health and in reducing stigma within the medical profession.

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the college

The Royal College of Psychiatrists' Winter Business Meeting 2007

The Winter Business Meeting was held at the Royal College of Psychiatrists on 23 January 2007. There were 27 members of the College present.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the Winter Business Meeting held at the Royal College of Psychiatrists on 24 January 2006 were approved as a correct record.

2. Obituary

The obituary list of members and associates who had died since the

Annual General Meeting in 2006 was received.

3. Election of Honorary Fellows

The following were elected to the Honorary Fellowship for 2007:

Lord Denis Victor Carter
(to be awarded posthumously)
Professor Anthony Ward Clare, FRCPsych
The Rt Hon The Baroness Hale
of Richmond, DBE, PC
Dr Sheila Mann, FRCPsych
Professor Bruce Singh,
MBBS, PhD, FRACP, FRANZCP.

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Annual elections – Honorary Officers

Notice to Members and Fellows

Fellows and Members of the College are reminded of their rights in connection with the forthcoming elections for the offices of Dean, Registrar and Treasurer.

All Honorary Officers are eligible for re-election.

The nominating meeting of the Central Executive Committee will be held on 20 April 2007 and the last date for receiving nominations will be 19 May 2007.

The relevant Bye-Laws and Regulations are printed below.



Bye-Laws Section XII. The Other Honorary Officers

1. The Central Executive Committee shall, in accordance with the Regulations, make its nominations for the offices of Dean, Registrar, Treasurer, and Librarian¹ at the first meeting after the name of the President for the next ensuing College year has become known. Written nominations² for the above Honorary Offices, accompanied in each case by the nominee's written consent to stand for election, may also be lodged with the Registrar at such time as may be prescribed by the Regulations, provided that each such nomination is supported in writing by not less than twelve Members of the College who are not members of the Central Executive Committee.

2. The Dean, Registrar, Treasurer, and Librarian¹ shall be elected by the Members of the College, in each case in accordance with the procedure prescribed by the Regulations.

Regulations XII. Election of the Other Honorary Officers

1. The method of electing the Dean, Librarian,¹ Registrar, and Treasurer shall be the same as that for electing the President, save that nominations from Members of the College who are not members of the Central Executive Committee shall be lodged with the Registrar between the first day of June in any calendar year and the date which is four clear weeks after that meeting of the Central Executive Committee which is the first held after the name of the President for the next ensuing College year has become known. The Editor, the Deputy Registrars, the Associate Deans and the Vice-Presidents shall be appointed following advertisement and interview.

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Proposal for a special interest group in forensic psychotherapy

Procedure for establishing a special interest group:

1. Any member wishing to establish a special interest group shall write to the Registrar with relevant details.
2. The Registrar shall forward the application to the Central Executive Committee.
3. If the Central Executive Committee approves the principle of establishing such a special interest group then it will direct the Registrar to place a notice in

the *Bulletin*, or its equivalent, asking members of the College to write in support of such a group and expressing willingness to participate in its activities.

4. If at least 120 members reply to this notice within 4 months of publication, then the Central Executive Committee shall formally approve the establishment of the special interest group.

In accordance with this procedure, the Central Executive Committee has approved a proposal for the establishment of a special interest group in forensic psychotherapy.

Background to the proposal

Mentally disordered offenders are a group for whom therapeutic treatment often involves a complex approach, drawing on many areas of psychiatry. Psychotherapeutic treatment has to work at the interface of the criminal justice system and often takes place within secure settings. Most patients have complex problems often involving comorbid disorders such as mental illness, personality disorder and addictive disorders, as well as their violent and offending behaviour. Managing these patients can take its toll on staff and institutions. Applying psychotherapy to the treatment and management of this group is a developing field. For these reasons there is a recognised need to support forensic psychotherapy as a specific sub-speciality both of forensic psychiatry and medical psychotherapy.

Given planned changes according to Modernising Medical Careers, which will have a significant effect on dual CCT training, the National Strategy in Forensic Psychotherapy has been working with the College to ensure that the sub-speciality of forensic psychotherapy maintains and develops its presence. Although forensic psychotherapy is often described as a dual-interest specialty between the disciplines of forensic psychiatry and psychotherapy it also extends to other branches of psychiatry such as general psychiatry, addiction psychiatry, child and adolescent psychiatry and learning disability.

If we were able to form a special interest group in forensic psychotherapy we would aim to:

- share knowledge and work in the field to help develop the specialty
- bring together psychiatrists from allied specialties with an interest in the field
- contribute towards training and continuing professional development for psychiatrists
- support the discipline during changes in training and the implementation of

Modernising Medical Careers, and ensure that the field remains visible and supports interest across a wide College membership

- help support educational and training initiatives for psychiatrists working with particular patient groups, for example, people with personality disorder, learning disability and addictive disorders
- act in an advisory role and resource, if appropriate, for other College Faculties.

We would hope to establish an ongoing forum for psychiatrists, via regular meetings and events, to develop professional networking, research and educational opportunities in this field. We hope very much that you will be able to support this proposal.

Members are invited to write in support of this group and express willingness to participate in its activities. Interested members should write to the Registrar care of Miss Sue Duncan at the College. If 120 members reply to this notice within 4 months of publication, then the Central Executive Committee shall formally approve the establishment of this special interest group.

Professor Sue Bailey Registrar, Royal College of Psychiatrists

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Honorary Fellowships

Nominations for the College's Honorary Fellowship will be discussed at the October meeting of the Education Training and Standards Committee.

The regulations of the College state under Bye-Law Section V that 'Subject to the Regulations the College may elect as an Honorary Fellow any person, whether or not that person is a member of the medical profession, who either is eminent in psychiatry or in allied or connected sciences or disciplines or has rendered distinguished service to humanity in relation to the study, prevention or treatment of mental illness or to subjects allied thereto or connected therewith or has rendered notable service to the College or to the Association.'

Nomination forms are available from Miss K. Hillman, Department of Postgraduate Educational Services (email: khillman@rcpsych.ac.uk), to whom nominations for Honorary Fellowship should be sent by 30 June 2007. Such nominations must contain recommendations by no fewer than six Members of the College, and include full supporting documentation.

Robert Jackson Head of Postgraduate Educational Services, Royal College of Psychiatrists

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1. The Central Executive Committee agreed in October 2006 that there should no longer be an Honorary Librarian; the Bye-Laws and Regulations are currently being amended to reflect this.
2. Nomination forms may be obtained from Candace Gillies-Wright, email: cgillies-wright@rcpsych.ac.uk.