



columns

even operate under an unfamiliar Mental Health Act.

In many cases, the travel and hotel expenses are considerable for the SHO's to pay. If they do eventually pass the exam, the letter of congratulations asks straight away for the membership fee. It leaves an impression that all the College is interested in is money, and is lacking in human compassion and thought for their SHO's.

The SHO's do not seem to have an effective voice in the College. In general psychiatry, we now have effective users' groups representing the patients. We need a similar effective voice representing the SHO's. My SHO's said that they would be most grateful if I would write to the College on their behalf.

If the College is experienced by the trainees as insensitive to their feelings, this should be a matter of general concern for the membership. I wonder if there are others in the College, whether affiliates, or members who also feel that there is a need to alter the MRCPsych exam arrangements with more thought and compassion for the SHO's position?

Richard Lucas Consultant Psychiatrist, St Ann's Hospital, 63 Ossulton Way, London N2 0JY

Points in response to letter from Dr Lucas

In allocating candidates to clinical centres, the criteria are that they are not sent to a centre where they have previously worked, where they are currently working or where they have been examined before.

The College is dependent upon the centres which volunteer their resources to accommodating the clinical examinations and although, geographically, these are spread as widely as possible it inevitably can mean that candidates are required to travel to a centre that meets the allocation criteria. Candidates are made aware of this when entering for the examination.

These criteria were put in place and continue to be operated in the best interests of the candidates. In implementing them, the aim is to ensure that all candidates have an equal chance in the assessment, and that no one could construe that they have been either advantaged or disadvantaged by having had previous contact with the patients with whom they

will be presented during the clinical examination.

Every effort is made to allow candidates sufficient time to make their travel plans to the clinical centre to which they have been allocated. The minimum time which candidates will have to arrange their travel and, if necessary, accommodation is 2 weeks.

Professor O. A. Oyeboode Chief Examiner

I agree entirely with Dr Lucas that SHO's need and deserve an effective voice within our College. We have two mechanisms in place to achieve this. The Inceptorship scheme is open to all trainees intending to take the MRCPsych examination and puts them in contact with the College, provides them with free or subsidised subscription to the College Journals and gives them regular information about relevant College events. In addition, SHO's form an important part of the Collegiate Trainee Committee (TC) membership. Through the CTC, SHO's (as well as specialist registrars) are represented on all key College committees.

Professor Cornelius Katona Dean

the college

Winter Business Meeting

4.30 pm on 24 January 2003, to be held at the Royal College of Psychiatrists following the meeting of Council. Chaired by the President, Dr Mike Shooter.

Agenda

- (1) To approve the Minutes of the previous Winter Business Meeting held at the Royal College of Psychiatrists on 5 February 2002
- (2) Obituary
- (3) Election of Honorary Fellows

John Bowis OBE MEP

Mr Bowis is a dedicated career politician, who has consistently demonstrated commitment to mental health issues, firstly as a Member of Parliament committed to constituency issues, secondly as a government Minister for Health when he held the mental health portfolio for 3 years, thirdly as a full-time consultant to the World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre at the Institute of Psychiatry and now as a Member of the European Parliament. He gives his time freely to the mental health cause, within the European Parliament, within the UK and across the world. He has been an active contributor to a number of College conferences and events. Some examples of mental health initiatives during his time as Minister for

Health include: the Homeless Mentally Ill Initiative, which set up outreach teams and hostels, and the inquiry into mental health of Black people in the UK. Mr Bowis launched the Spectrum of Care, conferences of users and purchasers in 24-hour nursed care; the medium secure beds expansion of the Glancy Report; and the suicide prevention strategy, and departmental support of the Defeat Depression Campaign. He has raised the profile of child and adolescent mental health and secured significant increases in funding for mental health services; he reviewed the future of high-security hospitals and the care of people with personality disorder and took a number of initiatives to improve the care of people with learning disabilities. While supporting the WHO global campaigns on mental health and on epilepsy, he opened doors to Health Ministers in various parts of the world and helped mental health professionals influence the health priorities of their governments. John Bowis is a great ally for mental health, who has played a substantial role in stimulating international and national political will to improve mental health services throughout the world.

Lord Melvyn Bragg

The work of Lord Melvyn Bragg, FRSL, DLitt, MA, FRTS, television presenter, novelist and broadcaster, and currently President of MIND, will be very familiar to most people. Lord Bragg's name is

synonymous with the arts in general. He has worked in broadcasting since 1961 and is currently Controller of Arts and Features at London Weekend Television (LWT), Editor and Presenter of *The South Bank Show* and Executive Producer of several other arts' strands. He also writes for numerous publications. He is President of the National Campaign for the Arts, a Governor of the London School of Economics and Political Science and Chancellor of Leeds University. He was made a Life Peer in 1998. In 2001, he won the Prix Italia Special Award for 25 seasons of *The South Bank Show* and, among many other achievements, has received Honorary Doctorates and Fellowships from numerous academic organisations.

Lord Bragg has been involved with MIND in Carlisle for 16 years and became President of the national organisation in 2001. His awareness of the distress experienced by those with mental illness and of the stigma surrounding mental health has strengthened his resolve to campaign on mental health issues in the House of Lords and to raise awareness of the extent of the problem.

Professor John Cox

Professor John Cox can be justifiably singled out as an individual whose contribution has been exceptionally distinguished across various medical disciplines. His activities have been extremely wide-ranging over a very long period covering