

psychiatry. However, many districts are finding it difficult to agree unified IT strategies which encompass the needs of whole administrative units.

CAP services are thinly spread and have a generally weak administrative structure. Budgets are small and represent usually a tiny part of the overall district mental health budget.

A second consideration is that CAP services are mostly discrete within MH facilities in general and maintain separate psychiatric records. Our local experience with existing systems suggests that child and adolescent psychiatrists could fall behind in introducing IT if they wait for mental health units to buy a total system (Byrne, 1989). In this situation the advantages of a system specifically designated for CAP will be large in terms of autonomy and flexibility of use by clinicians who are involved in management of their own service. Finally, with only one real commercial application in the field, future costs could be affected by the emergence of a monopoly supplier.

Future strategy

There is a powerful argument that IT strategies for small specialities will be restricted if confined to the resources of individual DHAs. In the new White Paper environment IT and audit facilities will be the key to successful contract writing. CAP services which are unable to generate the interest and finance for IT in their own districts may well find that come full implementation of NHS reforms they may be vulnerable to competitive bids from other departments or even entirely new consortia based on psychology or social work backgrounds.

There is a need here for a regional or even national dimension to facilitate IT developments for small sub-specialities such as child and adolescent psychiatry. This brief survey shows that there is valuable programming and hands on expertise within centres around the country, but these efforts need financial and technical support.

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Afterthought

Poetry

There is a traditional type of Japanese poetry in which, through the evocation of perfection in a single moment, the poet clears the mind and touches the heart. These poems of 17 syllables are called Haiku.

Deep in the mountains
Solitude . . . serenity,
Silence, stillness, peace.

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