

The College

South Western Division trainees' day

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A trainees' day for the South West Division took place at Knowle Hospital, Fareham, Hampshire on 9 September 1988.

While our trainees are dispersed over a wide geographical area, from Gloucester in the North and from Cornwall to Portsmouth in the South, and despite the meeting being held in the Division's most Eastern corner, it was gratifyingly well attended with 49 trainees and tutors present at its zenith. It was particularly pleasing to see trainees from the South West Region present in force.

The morning session was chaired by Dr Pamela Ashurst, Consultant Psychotherapist and Clinical Tutor, Southampton. The first speaker was Professor H. G. Morgan, Department of Mental Health, University of Bristol and Chief Examiner for the College. As the revised MRCPsych examination is a relatively recent innovation, with much attendant anxiety on the part of many trainees, it was Professor Morgan's remit to calm us and quell our collective neurosis. He started our course of treatment by emphasising that the aim of the new examination was primarily to prepare trainees for a career as psychiatrists. Working for the examination should not be a rigid exercise, an end in itself, but rather an introduction to wider issues. He suggested that the good trainee should be curious, questioning and not simply accepting of what he reads or is taught. Our attention was also drawn to the qualities of the "good psychiatrist", which include empathy, sensitivity and self-observation. The new format has these in its sights. Professor Morgan then went on to describe in detail the various components of both the preliminary test and membership examinations. He concentrated largely on the clinicals, pointing out along the way what the examiners would be seeking in terms of technique, approach and style. From the point of view of those on the receiving end, perhaps the biggest difference between old and new, is the introduction of the clinical component to the preliminary Test and the extension of basic sciences throughout both parts of the examination. This is a more appropriate arrangement since it was manifestly unsatisfactory that clinical skills remained unassessed for some

three to four years following the commencement of training, and clearly artificial that basic sciences and clinical psychiatry should be separated by the examination system, rather than proceed side by side. The new format has "commonsense appeal". Professor Morgan rounded off his talk by stressing for us the importance that the College places on the examination as a whole, and the lengths taken to ensure objectivity, fairness, and to provide feedback. Finally, we were delighted to be informed that it is an even worse ordeal being an examiner. Hurray. Cured.

The second speaker, Dr Keith Duddleston, Lecturer in Psychiatry, University of Southampton, tackled the less anxiety-provoking but, for most of us anyway, more problematical task of successfully completing (and publishing) a research project. Likening the process to a journey and entitling his talk "the trainees' pilgrimage", he took us step by step through its difficulties, aggravations and pitfalls. This was full of sound advice based on his own experiences. Apparently, starting out is the easy bit, the idea often (invariably?) being hatched in the pub. We were advised to choose a subject which interested us, collaborate with a colleague, to seek the advice of a senior who publishes regularly, and to obtain agreement about authorship at an early stage. The next step was to get a computer search of the relevant literature, outline the aim of the study and elucidate the methodology in detail. Having done this, take the protocol to a statistician and don't, whatever we do, forget the ethical committee or the pilot study. Now the hard bit – collecting the data. If we thought that this was tough, writing it up would prove to be even more so. Finally, having completed the journey, we were advised not to be surprised or to give up if the paper were rejected first time – persistence apparently pays off.

After lunch, the afternoon session tackled the problem of "The implications for training of a shift to community orientated psychiatry". The session was chaired by Dr Charles Shawcross, Consultant Psychiatrist, Knowle Hospital, who helpfully started proceedings by outlining the main differences

between the traditional hospital-centred modes of care and that of the community-based prototype. We then divided into groups to discuss the various pros and cons of our new life-style, following which the nominated group chairperson presented the distilled wisdom of their team. Inevitably, more attention was given to potential disadvantages rather than benefits. It was thought that possible problem areas included inadequate supervision from consultants, the relegation of our role within the multidisciplinary community team to that of "pill-pusher", the demoralising effects of diluted peer group interaction, along with a host of organisational difficulties. Will the community-based consultancy of the future be a

less attractive proposition, with the potential for harming recruitment into the psychiatric ranks? A show of hands indicated that some 60–70% of trainees shared this anxiety, and it is noteworthy that of the remainder the majority abstained on the basis of insufficient evidence. Concluding, the Chairman noted a "worrying negativity" – fair comment indeed.

Due largely to the quality of the speakers and the efforts of the chairpersons, the day proved a stimulating experience and, by common consent, a great success. We would like to thank all those who conspired to make it so and E. Merck Limited, who provided an excellent lunch.

Annual Elections

Honorary Officers, Council and Court of Electors

Fellows and Members of the College are reminded of their rights in connection with the forthcoming elections for the offices of Dean, Registrar, Treasurer, Editor and Librarian. All Honorary Officers are eligible for re-election.

The nominating meeting of Council will be held on 15 March 1989, and the last date for receiving nominations will therefore be 12 April 1989. Nominations may also be submitted for vacancies on the Court of Electors and for Elected Members of Council. The relevant Bye-Laws and Regulations are printed below.

Extracts from Bye-Laws and Regulations

Bye-Law XII THE OTHER HONORARY OFFICERS

1. The Council shall, in accordance with the Regulations, make its nominations for the offices of Dean, Registrar, Treasurer, Editor, Librarian at the first meeting after the name of the President for the next ensuing College year has become known. Written nominations 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 Council.

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

Regulation XII ELECTION OF THE OTHER HONORARY OFFICERS

1. The method of electing the Honorary Officers other than the President and the Vice-Presidents and Sub-Deans shall be the same as that for electing the President,* save that nominations from Members of the College who are not members of the Council shall be lodged with the Registrar between the first day of January in any calendar year and the date which is four clear weeks after that meeting of the Council which is first held after the name of the President for the next ensuing College year has become known, or (as the case may be) which is four clear weeks after that meeting of the Council which, in the case of a tie on the second ballot, determines the election of the President.

Bye-Law XXI THE COURT OF ELECTORS

4. At the first meeting of the Council in alternate years after the name of the President for the next ensuing College year has become known, the Council shall nominate a sufficient number of candidates for appointment as Electors to ensure an election, which will be held by a postal ballot of all Members of the College in the manner prescribed by the Regulations. Additional nominations may be lodged with the Registrar between the beginning of the then current calendar year and the end of four clear weeks after the meeting of the Council above referred to. No

*i.e. Written nominations, accompanied in each case by the nominee's written consent to stand for election, may be lodged with the Registrar, provided that each such nomination is supported in writing by not less than twelve Members of the College who are not members of the Council. An election by ballot shall be held in accordance with the provisions of the Regulations.