

found to have £15 in her possession. She explained that this money had been given to her by the old lady to buy a cheap pair of slippers to replace the ones the old lady had worn out.

Some time later the police took a statement from the old lady in which she said she had not asked the helper to buy her new slippers and had not given her any money.

The prosecution supplied the defence with a letter from the old lady's family doctor stating that she was suffering from senile dementia, transient paranoid psychosis and depression. It went on to state that she was rather confused and deaf. However, the prosecution objected to the old lady being seen by a psychiatrist for the defence and sought to have her statement read out in court on the basis that she was too infirm to attend. In the event the case collapsed half way through and the accused was discharged.

When I thought I might become involved in the case as an expert witness I attempted to research the subject. I had come across such problems, but not involving the legal process. When some people become forgetful as a result of a dementing process or for other reasons they misplace things including money, or spend money and then forget they have done so. A

proportion of these who could be described as having a personality trait more extropunitive than intropunitive will blame others for the perceived loss. They may accuse members of their family, friends, neighbours, or people coming into their home to help them. I have been accused on one occasion, but it is unusual for doctors to be suspected!

Such accusations cause considerable anxiety and distress, significantly increased if the legal system is involved. In the case briefly described the home care assistant may have been stealing money and the taking of money from the old lady to buy slippers was clearly unwise. The case did not proceed but the accused must have suffered a great deal of distress, all the worse if innocent, which was most likely.

In my attempt to research the subject, I failed to find anything about it except for the briefest mention. I would have thought the matter was of some importance and I would be most interested in hearing from any reader who knows of any work on this subject.

TONY WHITEHEAD, 2 Beacon Court, Greenways, Ovingdean, Brighton and Hove BN2 7AY

Corrigenda

Timms, P., *Bulletin*, 21, 573–575. Column 2, line 1 of the displayed text on p. 574 should read, 'It is inappropriate . . .':

Interim statement on anti-dementia drugs, *Bulletin*, 21, 586–587. The date of the Kelly *et al* reference should read 1997.