

situation. I should point out, however, that even at that time there was considerable worry among those working there as to whether these efforts would be enabled to continue and I can only hope that they have done so as I have not been able to visit the hospital again since that time. We were also very pleased to see some of the hostels on the Greek mainland to which patients from Leros had been transferred but were nevertheless worried as there seemed to be some reluctance on the part of the authorities to continue with this encouraging development. We were also saddened to find that, although the official recommendation from the EC was that the old hospital should be closed and gradually phased out, several new buildings were being erected on the site.

There was one further point which was raised in the letter to you; that the embargo on new admissions to Leros was in fact introduced by the Greek government in 1981 prior to our first visit in 1983. The point I was making, however, was that I personally have no doubt that the maintenance of that embargo was largely due to the influence coming from the EC intervention. Indeed, to my knowledge there has been some slippage in this regard and a small number of new patients have in fact been admitted to Leros from surrounding areas.

I hope these remarks go some way to clear up the confusion and inaccuracies in my interview which were due to the time at which this was carried out, with the inevitable delay between then and its publication.

IVOR W. BROWNE

University College
St Brendan's Hospital
Dublin 7

(In future the dates of interviews will be added. – eds.)

'Family therapy in the training of general psychiatrists'

DEAR SIRs

I read with interest the article by Drs Wilkinson & van Boxel on family therapy experience in the training of general psychiatrists (*Psychiatric Bulletin*, 1992, 16, 790–781). I agree with all they say about the importance of such experience for trainees and the specific skills which can thus be acquired.

There is also a role for systemic family therapy in adult psychiatry as a treatment modality (Bloch *et al.*, 1991; Macdonald, 1992). In our own brief therapy clinic we see unselected adult referrals from general practitioners and others. The team has been established for four years and offers strategic and solution-focused therapy. Contact with us is usually brief, 12 sessions being the maximum but four the average. Clients or referring agents report satisfaction after

one year in two-thirds of our cases. Junior medical staff have commented on the value of experience in this style of working. A detailed follow-up study is in progress and will be reported in due course.

This appears to be a cost effective way of providing treatment for a wide variety of disorders as well as introducing staff to the techniques of family assessment referred to by Drs Wilkinson & van Boxel.

ALASDAIR J. MACDONALD

Crichton Royal Hospital
Dumfries DG1 4TG

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Cognitive therapy in literature

DEAR SIRs

In 'Cognitive therapy and Winnie-the-Pooh' (*Psychiatric Bulletin*, 1992, 16, 758) Dr Hosty draws attention to principles of cognitive therapy in *Winnie-the-Pooh*. The work of other artists and writers also contained some of these principles, long before the development of cognitive therapy.

In *Nicholas Nickleby*, the "genius of despair and suicide" uses cognitive techniques to prevent the Baron von Schwilkenhausen from committing suicide. Dickens concludes: "And my advice to all men is, that if ever they become hipped and melancholy from similar causes (as very many men do), they look at both sides of the question, applying a magnifying glass to the best one . . .).

In a letter to his brother, Theo, Vincent van Gogh writes, "My head is sometimes heavy and often it burns and my thoughts are confused, – I don't see how I shall ever get that difficult and extensive study into it – to get used to and to persevere in simple regular study after all those emotional years is not always easy. And yet I go on; if we are tired isn't it then because we have already walked a long way, and if it is true that man has his battle to fight on earth, is not then the feeling of weariness and the burning of the head a sign that we have been struggling? When we are working at a difficult task and strive after a good thing we fight a righteous battle, the direct reward of which is that we are kept from much evil."

As Freud did not discover the unconscious, Aaron Beck did not discover the principles of cognitive therapy. His great achievement was rather to recognise their importance, offer a comprehensive list of cognitive errors or faulty assumptions and describe in detail therapeutic interventions to challenge and