

carers (O'Connor *et al*, 1990). They often feel socially isolated and welcome the opportunity to ventilate their feelings and discuss their problems with others who they perceive understand their situation.

To meet some of this need, we developed a 'telephone helpline' using volunteers from the local branch of the Alzheimer's Disease Society and co-ordinated by ourselves. The service provides emergency contact and brief telephone counselling to carers of demented patients on a 24 hour, seven days a week basis. The volunteers have looked after a dementing relative in the past so have a wide range of both practical and psychological experience on which to base their counselling. They have undergone training sessions in telephone counselling including seminars on active listening techniques and information gathering, together with opportunities to role play situations. Confidentiality is also discussed. Counsellors meet regularly to share experiences and develop skills, and data on calls and subject matter of queries are being collected. The name 'Alzheimer's Disease Helpline' was chosen by the volunteers, and it, plus a brief outline of the service and its telephone number, has been widely publicised throughout the district using posters, in hospitals, health centres, libraries etc., and the local media.

Volunteers take calls in their own homes using an 'on-call' rota. Initially, callers dialling the advertised number received a recorded message giving the telephone number of the counsellor for that day, but soon all calls will be automatically re-routed directly to the counsellor's home.

As the numbers of elderly dementing patients increase, it will be important for old age psychiatry services to find cost-effective ways of supporting carers. A 'telephone helpline' may be one such method.

ANTHONY J. ELLIOTT
DAVID G.J. BATTIN

WRI: Newtown Branch
Newtown Road
Worcester WR5 1JG

Reference

- O'CONNOR, D. W., POLLITT, P. A., ROTH, M., BROOKE, C. P. B. & REISS, B. B. (1990) Problems reported by relatives in a community study of dementia. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 156, 835-841.

Erratum

Correspondence, *Psychiatric Bulletin*, November 1992, 16, 727. The correct spelling of the name of

Psychopathology and the Wimbledon Tennis Championships

DEAR SIRS

I wish to report on a case where television coverage of the Wimbledon Tennis Championships was incorporated into a patient's psychopathology.

"S" is a 47-year-old woman who has suffered from schizophrenia for 17 years. She has suffered from delusions that Margaret Thatcher and the Foreign Office are plotting against her. She has experienced auditory hallucinations including audible thoughts, thought broadcasting, thought stopping and has exhibited knight's move thinking.

During her current admission she has also experienced functional hallucinations. She hears voices engaged in conversation when she can hear a health care assistant drawing wool through her fingers while knitting. She also hears voices when she can hear plates clattering as they are loaded into the ward dishwasher. Her mental state has gradually improved over the last two months while being treated with clozapine.

During the last two weeks of June she experienced a new phenomenon. While watching Wimbledon on the television she heard a voice only when either the ball is struck by one of the players or when it hits the ground. If two non-British players are playing she believes that they have a lot of money to give to her and can hear a voice coming from the two players which says during a rally "what ... do ... you ... want ... the ... money ... for". The patient experiences her thoughts leaving her head and the reply "to help with my illness" is returned.

When the British player Jeremy Bates was playing his match against Guy Forget the experiences were different and more distressing. As the ball went to and fro she heard messages such as "go ... and ... see ... a ... solicitor ..." "you ... are ... innocent ...". Frequently the rallies were too short to convey an entire message. "S" considered that the excited crowd were trying to solve her perceived problem with the Foreign Office and Mrs Thatcher for her. During the loud applause reserved for the British player's winning points she could hear a voice saying "yes that's right, that's right".

Have any other psychiatrists observed psychopathology relating to other major sporting events?

D.N. PROTHEROE

Pontefract General Infirmary
Pontefract, West Yorkshire WF8 1PL

the author of the letter headed 'Psychiatry and philosophy' is Dr M. Salman Raschid.