

academic department. Secondly, the post devoted entirely to mental handicap for the highly trained enthusiast. General and specialist psychiatric practice are complementary. Every consultant psychiatrist today should have a grounding in mental illness, mental handicap, child psychiatry, forensic psychiatry, the psychiatry of old age, psychotherapy and psycho-sexual disorders. At the same time there should be the opportunity for some consultants to be especially concerned with the mentally handicapped on a broader basis. They should be closely associated with those working in the basic sciences and explore the application of rapidly expanding knowledge in those fields to clinical practice. Such posts must be connected with Universities.

In our opinion the re-organization of medical duties is essential and if carried out will attract able doctors to take an interest in the subject and provide a developing medical and scientific service to the great benefit of the patients. An exciting and worthwhile future could be developed, and the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the Department of Health and Social Services should advise Area Health Authorities to re-design unfilled posts on the above lines.

*Westwood Hospital,
Bradford.*

J. BLAKE

*Meanwood Park Hospital,
Leeds.*

D. A. SPENCER

*Fieldhead Hospital,
Wakefield.*

F. E. JAMES

BIOLOGICAL PSYCHIATRY GROUP

DEAR SIR,

There has been an encouraging response to the suggestion made in a letter in the April issue of the *Bulletin* (p 70), that we should develop a Group for Biological Psychiatry in the Royal College of Psychiatrists. Many members of the College, including members of Council, have written in support of the idea and expressed their willingness to assist in the formation of the Group. At a meeting held on 4 July 1978 there was a general discussion of the meaning of 'biological psychiatry' and of the need for meetings attended both by psychiatrists and by basic scientists to encourage joint research in the biological fields related to psychiatry. At this meeting it was agreed unanimously that a Group for Biological Psychiatry be established and that it should apply for recognition by the Council of the Royal College. It was agreed further that Dr T. J. Crow should serve as Secretary

of the Group, and Dr D. Richter as Chairman, until the membership of the Group has been more fully established and formal elections can be held.

It is now desirable that we should know more accurately the extent of the support for the Group within the College. We should therefore be glad if any members of the College who may be interested in attending the meetings and supporting the activities of the Group, and who have not already written to me, will kindly let us hear from them so that their names can be included in the list of founder members of the Group. We hope to arrange a scientific meeting of the Group to take place during one of the forthcoming meetings of the Royal College.

*Deans Cottage,
Walton-on-the-Hill,
Tadworth,
Surrey KT20 7TT*

DEREK RICHTER

*Division of Psychiatry,
Clinical Research Centre,
Northwick Park Hospital,
Watford Road,
Harrow,
Middlesex HA1 3UJ*

TIM CROW

ONE FLEW OUT OF THE CUCKOO'S NEST

DEAR SIR

In an otherwise balanced and informed article, I wonder whether Dr. Davison (*Bulletin*, June p 106) may have lost concentration for a moment and made himself a co-traveller of Thomas Szasz. In discussing management, he refers to the 'purely medical aspects'. I wonder whether Dr Davison, like Szasz, equates 'medical' with 'organic'.

Of course, 'medical' encompasses both psychic and organic pathology. For instance, Timothie Bright, in the first text in English on psychiatry, in considering what today we would call neurosis, regards both psychic and organic phenomena as being his legitimate concern. Bright's work in turn was influenced by Galen's work, and this again sprang from the ancient roots of Medicine. A morbid pathologist and a psychopathologist are rightly medical men and deal with phenomena which impinge on each other.

JOHN G. HOWELLS

*The Institute of Family Psychiatry,
23 Henley Road,
Ipswich IP1 3TF.*