



columns

number of thoughtful publications on the care and needs of these birds.

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Forensic telepsychiatry

We read the article by Jones *et al* on setting up a telepsychiatry service (*Psychiatric Bulletin*, December 2006, **30**, 464–467) with interest and optimism, having developed the first forensic telepsychiatry service in Nottinghamshire in 2005 (Saleem & Stankard, 2006). To date, we have undertaken 30 forensic assessments, 4 of which have resulted in hospital admissions. Assessments were primarily undertaken using existing video-link facilities within local magistrates' courts and HM prisons. Our experiences support the opinion that this saves time, cost (Zollo *et al*, 1999) and improves access to psychiatric services (Zaylor *et al*, 2000).

However, although Jones *et al* describe the development of services, they do not state whether they have assessed patients themselves using videoconferencing facilities. If they have, it would be useful to establish links between telepsychiatric services within the UK, forensic or otherwise.

At the College's invitation, we are conducting a workshop on this subject in Prague, at the Annual Meeting of the Forensic Faculty in February 2007. We have also developed a forensic telepsychiatric steering group, with a research sub-committee, in Nottingham. We are coordinating several research projects which are exploring the use of teleconferencing facilities within forensic psychiatry. We would welcome any

additional views and opinions on expanding this work.

It is crucial for services across the UK to share experiences and promote practices. The promotion of telepsychiatry has the potential to change current practice positively. This is particularly important if we are to succeed in delivering timely, easily accessible and clinically sound psychiatric services, with the additional spotlight on cost-efficiency with respect to health service delivery.

SALEEM, Y. & STANKARD, P. (2006) I'm only at the end of a videolink. *BMJ Career Focus*, **333**, 223.

ZAYLOR, C., WHITTEN, P. & KINGSLEY, C. (2000) Telemedicine services to a county jail. *Journal of Telemedicine and Telecare*, **6**, 93–95.

ZOLLO, S., KIENZLE, M., LOEFFELHOLZ, P., *et al* (1999) Telemedicine to IOWA's correctional facilities: initial clinical experience and assessment of program costs. *Telemedicine Journal*, **5**, 291–301.

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Mental healthcare for psychiatrists

We read the article by White *et al* (*Psychiatric Bulletin*, October 2006, **30**, 382–384) with great interest, as we have conducted a similar postal survey of 1640 general practitioners and psychiatrists in Devon and Cornwall regarding depression and stigma. We also achieved a high response rate (75%), indicating the importance of this issue to doctors. When we asked about sources of help respondents would turn to if they were

experiencing excessive stress, more reported that they would seek help from family and friends (95%) and from colleagues (65%). Our slightly different findings might be because we asked about 'stress' rather than 'mental illness', but the overall trends are similar.

The barriers to disclosing mental illness reported by White *et al* are supported by our findings. However, we found that barriers to seeking help very often included concerns about letting colleagues down and confidentiality, with concern about career progression cited by only 16% (although women were twice as concerned about this as men).

White *et al* found that 20% of psychiatrists admit to self-prescribing for mental illness, but in our study the rate was only 7%. The fact that our respondents were more willing to disclose stress to colleagues and reported less self-prescribing perhaps reflects a more open culture in Devon and Cornwall since the introduction of an effective occupational health service.

Overall, our study in the South-West confirms the findings of White *et al* in the West Midlands. Both studies address the poorly researched but important area of doctors' attitudes towards mental illness and we agree with the recommendations of White *et al*. There is still a long way to go in terms of educating doctors about looking after and improving their own mental health and in reducing stigma within the medical profession.

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the college

The Royal College of Psychiatrists' Winter Business Meeting 2007

The Winter Business Meeting was held at the Royal College of Psychiatrists on 23 January 2007. There were 27 members of the College present.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the Winter Business Meeting held at the Royal College of Psychiatrists on 24 January 2006 were approved as a correct record.

2. Obituary

The obituary list of members and associates who had died since the

Annual General Meeting in 2006 was received.

3. Election of Honorary Fellows

The following were elected to the Honorary Fellowship for 2007:

Lord Denis Victor Carter
(to be awarded posthumously)
Professor Anthony Ward Clare, FRCPsych
The Rt Hon The Baroness Hale
of Richmond, DBE, PC
Dr Sheila Mann, FRCPsych
Professor Bruce Singh,
MBBS, PhD, FRACP, FRANZCP.

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Annual elections – Honorary Officers

Notice to Members and Fellows

Fellows and Members of the College are reminded of their rights in connection with the forthcoming elections for the offices of Dean, Registrar and Treasurer.

All Honorary Officers are eligible for re-election.

The nominating meeting of the Central Executive Committee will be held on 20 April 2007 and the last date for receiving nominations will be 19 May 2007.

The relevant Bye-Laws and Regulations are printed below.