

## European year of the elderly (and solidarity between the generations)

1993 is European year of the elderly. In November 1992 a meeting was held under the British Presidency of the European Community (EC) and sponsored by the Department of Health, Age Concern, Eurolink Age, the World Health Organisation and Merck Sharpe and Dohme to set the agenda and produce an EC "Action Plan". The College sent a representative and there were representatives from the Royal College of Physicians, the Department of Health, the British Geriatric Society, the British Medical Association and various voluntary organisations as well as many representatives of equivalent organisations from other European countries. The conference produced a set of priorities for public policy, self-help and local community action, quality of health care, health education and research which will be promoted during 1993, continuing on into a new EC programme for older people in 1994.

Meanwhile, the College has been arranging a series of initiatives as its own contribution to European year of the Elderly. These start on 23 February 1992 with the launch of the College's new pamphlet on depression in the elderly. The College also aims to arrange consensus meetings on depression in old age and dementia. These reflect the two main themes of the College's programme for the year: *Depression in old age—under-diagnosed and under-treated*, and *Dementia—not all confusion in old age is due to*

*irreversible dementia*. Subsidiary themes for the year include a plan to highlight ageism in the provision of services for old people and to explore issues in community care and alcohol and drug abuse in old age.

The College is devoting a session of its annual meeting programme to innovations in psychiatric services for old people and is seeking sponsorship for a public-opinion poll to explore public attitudes to mental illness in old age as the basis for a press conference. In addition the College will seek to place articles on its themes in appropriate sections of the professional and lay press. The journal *Geriatric Medicine* has already agreed to run a series on 'Depression in Old Age' in association with the College's 'Defeat Depression' campaign. Next year's College Christmas lecture will have a theme relating to old age.

At a local level, old age psychiatrists are being encouraged to set up postgraduate educationally approved meeting for GPs on the College's main themes for the year. Other important targets include managers and purchasers in the NHS. We hope to use the year to raise the profile of the positive things members of this College are already doing to improve the health of old people with mental disorder and to encourage new developments in this field in our own country and in the rest of the EC.

JOHN WATTIS

## Psychiatric Services for Children and Adolescents with Mental Handicap

The report of the Joint Working Party of the Sections of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Handicap Psychiatry on psychiatric services for Children and Adolescents with Mental Handicap was approved by the College Executive and Finance Committee on 10 July 1992.

The document is intended to be of use in discussion with service planning and purchasing bodies. It includes:

- (1) a description of psychiatric disorders which are particularly common in this population
- (2) an account of the range of resources, including personnel, which are required to deliver an appropriate psychiatric service to this population
- (3) a discussion of the various spheres of activity in which psychiatrists involved in such service provision may be engaged, including teaching, training, research and management

consultancy, in addition to a variety of specialised clinical procedures.

The recommendations of this report include:

- (1) that 0.2 whole time equivalent Consultant Psychiatrist per 100,000 population is required for this work
- (2) that Health Authority Purchasing teams should identify the appropriate local "provider" of this service.

*Working party members:* Professor S. Hollins (Chair); Dr R. Baker, Dr T. Berney, Dr D. Cotterell, Dr D. Dossetor, Professor A. Gath, Dr M. Lindsay, Dr C. Lucas, Professor A. R. Nicol, Dr G. O'Brien. Additional material and useful suggestions were provided by Professor J. Pearce and Dr Y. Wiley.

Copies of the full report, approved by Council, June 1992, are available from the Publications Department at the College, at a cost of £2.00.

GREGORY O'BRIEN