



planning issues. She also argued strongly that radical changes both to psychiatry training and to undergraduate and postgraduate training would be needed if we were to meet the challenge of recruiting and retaining sufficient psychiatrists to deliver mental health services into the new century. Her thinking has provided much of the basis for the recruitment and retention initiative the College is carrying forward with the Department of Health.

During her outstanding career, Rosemary Macdonald has shown a rare commitment to postgraduate medical training in general and to our speciality in particular. It is both a privilege and a personal pleasure to present her for the College's highest honour, the Honorary Fellowship.

Distinction Awards

The procedure in Northern Ireland

The Distinction and Meritorious Awards Scheme has been revised by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland, and new procedures were introduced in September 2001 for the 2001–2002 round of wards. The principal changes are as follows:

- (1) A system of self-nomination has been introduced and all consultants are invited to do this by completing a CV questionnaire form.
- (2) The monitoring has been strengthened by the collection of information on community background, ethnic origin, gender, age and marital status from employers.
- (3) There are six criteria to be considered in the recommendations for an award: professional excellence; research and innovation; outstanding administrative or management effort; outstanding contribution to other forms of service development (e.g. clinical audit, clinical governance, promulgation of evidence-based medicine); teaching and training; and outstanding service commitment. The last of these has been extended to read: 'outstanding commitment to the achievement of service goals, innovative service delivery, and the sustained delivery of high quality patient care in hard pressed service areas'.
- (4) The upper age limit of 62 has been removed.
- (5) The CV questionnaire forms are based on the specific criteria listed above and consultants are asked to demonstrate how they meet these.
- (6) A similar CV questionnaire form has been introduced for the 5-year reviews, together with a corresponding citation form.

The closing date for self-nomination is in September. All completed forms are sent to the Senior Award Holder, who convenes a meeting of all award holders (A+, A and B) to consider these. If unable to attend, award holders are invited to submit their support for the candidate(s) of their choice. All nominees are considered in turn and ranked in order according to the support of the panel members. Finally, a citation form, based on the same six criteria, is completed by a member of the Merit Award Holders' Panel on behalf of nominees considered by the panel to merit a Distinction Award.

In the 2001–2002 round, 13 self-nominations were received from 94 consultants. A further six consultants held an A+, A or B award. Six of the self-nominations were supported by the Award Holders' Panel and one was successful.

A detailed guide to the scheme is circulated to all consultants in June each year as well as an annual report the following May. The website address is: <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hss/dmsac.html>

Professor D. J. King

Linguists

The College receives regular enquiries from Members of the College and GPs regarding patients who are unable to speak English. We are asked if we can give the name of a psychiatrist able to communicate with patients in their own language. This list is also used by the central offices of the Mental Health Act Commission.

The languages we cover at the moment are as follows (the number in brackets indicates the number of doctors who speak that particular language):

Azerbaijani (1)
 Arabic (5)
 Bengali (6)
 Burmese (1)
 Cantonese (1)
 Dutch (2)
 Farsi (2)
 French (8)
 German (4)
 Greek (2)
 Gujarati (13)
 Hebrew (2)
 Hindi (22)
 Italian (5)
 Kannada (1)
 Konkani (1)
 Mandarin (1)
 Marathi (4)
 Marwadi (1)
 Nepali (3)
 Persian (2)
 Portuguese (1)
 Punjabi (15)

Romanian (1)
 Sinhalese (2)
 Spanish (4)
 Sudanese (2)
 Swedish (1)
 Telugu (1)
 Turkish (2)
 Ukrainian (1)
 Urdu (19)
 Yiddish (1)
 Yoruba (Nigerian) (1)

I shall be grateful if any Members who are able and willing to help in this way could write to me, giving me their contact address and telephone number.

Vanessa Cameron, Chief Executive, Royal College of Psychiatrists

Suicide in Prisons

Council Report 99. £7.50.
 64 pp.

Suicide in Prisons is the Royal College of Psychiatrists' response to a thematic review on this subject produced by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales (Home Office, 1999), called *Suicide is Everyone's Concern*.

The College takes a clinical approach to the prevention of suicide and the treatment of suicidal thinking. It is emphasised throughout that to carry out the recommendations, new resources will be required. More beds and more staff are required in the NHS. More and differently trained staff are required in the prison service. Unless services are resourced they are not services at all.

The commonest method of suicide in prison is asphyxiation, usually at night. The high-risk factors for suicide among prisoners are similar to those among other citizens: youth, male gender, depression, alcoholism and loss of a relative, friend or partner.

The thematic review implies that suicide rates are higher in prison than might be expected. The College accepts that suicide rates in prison are very high – too high – but they are not necessarily higher than can be expected given the vulnerable nature of the individuals, at high-risk of suicide, who are sent to prison.

The College emphasises the importance of making accurate diagnoses, if applicable, in all prisoners, and noting the significance of multiple diagnoses. Every prison should have a comprehensive primary care service with a secondary care community mental health team operating within the prison. It recommends that community drug teams should have access to prisoners and that all prison doctors should receive specific training in psychiatric and in drug misuse medicine.

Like the Chief Inspector, the College does not believe that prisons are suitable