

to those who had been sober for many years. I feel this breadth of experience was one of the real strengths of the group. Those new to the idea of sobriety gained from seeing people who had gone through a similar experience to themselves now enjoying happy and successful lives. Those whose families had broken up saw women whose families had re-formed following sobriety. Those who felt hopeless were greatly supported by hearing from people who had felt the same, but were now in control of their lives and their future. Everyone in the group, by virtue of their listening to others, was acting as a source of support to another individual. This gave a great sense of self worth to participants who felt they had nothing to offer to society.

Trainees in psychiatry have a lot of exposure to problem drinkers, especially when they are on call. They frequently see people in a drunken state – at times aggressive – making what seem to be unreasonable demands. The opportunity to have been involved with a group who seek to help themselves and others in a responsible and sympathetic manner has helped me to approach these people in a more positive and optimistic way.

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Miscellany

International Psycho-Oncology Society

Dr Lawrence Goldie, FRCPsych, has been elected Honorary Member of the International Psycho-Oncology Society (IPOS), one of the first three members of the Society of whom this honour has been conferred.

National Alcohol Helpline

The test phase of the London pilot for the National Alcohol Helpline started on 9 August 1993. Once this is completed it is planned for the service to become national in 1996. It will operate from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. seven evenings a week and will provide a safe and anonymous place for information and help. The number is 071 332 0202.

Depression in the elderly

The LiNC-UP educational slide kit entitled 'Depression in the Elderly – New Approaches to

Old Problems' contains 24 slides accompanied by detailed notes and looks at a number of topics ranging from the issues of diagnosis and assessment in primary care to long-term management approaches. Contact Invicta Pharmaceuticals, A Division of Pfizer Ltd, Ramsgate Road, Sandwich, Kent CT13 9NJ (telephone 0304 616142) for a complimentary copy. For further information on GP educational materials available, contact the Public Education Department at the College.

Care of mentally ill people in the community

The Mental Health Foundation has launched an inquiry into the care of severely mentally ill people in the community. It will be the first to involve senior figures from the health, social services, criminal justice and housing fields. The Inquiry began in October 1993 and will report in April 1994. It will meet every month. Further information: The Mental Health Foundation, 37 Mortimer Street, London W1N 7RJ.