

iatrogenic American culture-bound disorder (!) introduced by suggestion into a willing subject, rather like 'post-traumatic stress disorder'. Tongue in cheek but serious in mind.

EDWARD L. MARGETTS

University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Medical diplomas

DEAR SIRs

I read with interest the comments made by Malcolm P. I. Weller in his letter (*Bulletin*, March 1987, 11, 103) but I think that he may be knocking his head against a brick wall. Although our College is one of the youngest, it already presents with psychomotor retardation of the elderly.

A few years ago, I was annoyed to find that the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists was introducing a Diploma in Psychosexual Medicine. My annoyance was mainly because one of the requirements was that the applicants had to have two years gynaecological experience and although I have been running Sexual Dysfunction Clinics for over 15 years, I could not sit the examination for this Diploma. I felt that since the majority of sexual dysfunctions are caused by psychological or psychiatric factors our College should have been introducing such a Diploma.

Gynaecologists exclusively see female patients and although no-one can stop the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists from introducing any Diploma they wish, our College should have also introduced a Diploma in Psychosexual Medicine, or least should have asked the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists to do away with the requirement for two years gynaecological experience. After all why not have two years experience in urinary surgery—at least urinary surgeons can claim

acquaintance with genitals of both sexes. My letter was answered over a year later and the reply by the Registrar was irrelevant to the comments I was making.

The expertise of other branches of medicine can be practised only by the relevant medical practitioners but for psychiatric patients all sorts of experts are available. Every Tom, Dick and Harry can set up shop and claim to be Hypnotherapists, Psychoanalysts, Hypnoanalysts, Counsellors, Therapists, Sexual Therapists, Acupuncturists, Herbalist, Homeopathic Therapists, Acupressure Therapists, Aroma Therapists and so on. They can advertise themselves in the local press and attract clients who by the nature of their illness are already vulnerable.

Only the Royal College of Psychiatrists is equipped because of its expertise to organise research on these forms of therapies to prove their effectiveness or ineffectiveness, and if some of the therapies are effective, to introduce its own relevant Medical Diplomas, for example, Diploma in Medical Acupuncture, Diploma in Medical Hypnotherapy, Diploma in Medical Psychosexual Counselling, etc.

B. P. MARAGAKIS

Billinge Hospital
Billinge, near Wigan

DEAR SIRs

We have investigated the diploma that Dr Maragakis reported. However, we found that he was misinformed. The diploma was not being introduced by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, nor by any of our sister Colleges, but by an independent academic body. Thus, although we have some sympathy with Dr Maragakis' concern, we could not intervene in the situation.

R. G. PRIEST
Registrar

MIND Book of the Year 1987 The Allen Lane Award

MIND, the leading mental health charity, awards a £1,000 prize each year to the book which makes the greatest contribution to public understanding of mental illness or mental handicap. Nominations are particularly invited for works of fiction or non-fiction which describe the prevention, causes, treatment or experience of mental illness or mental handicap in an easy to read, non-technical style.

This special award was inaugurated in 1981 in memory of Allen Lane and is supported by the Allen Lane Foundation. Past winners include *The Art of Starvation* by Sheila

MacLeod, *Depression—The Way Out of Your Prison* by Dorothy Rowe, *A Woman in Custody* by Audrey Peckham and *Talking To A Stranger—A Consumer's Guide to Therapy* by Lindsay Knight.

The closing date for nominations is 5 October 1987. The winning entry will be announced at MIND's Annual Conference on 23 November 1987.

Nomination details and forms available from Christine Shaw, Assistant Director, MIND, 22 Harley Street, London W1N 2ED (telephone: 01 637 0741).

Biosocial Society Conference

A conference on sexuality and attraction—how our choice of sexual partner is determined, and the means by which deviant choices may be modified—will be held in Oxford from 10.00 a.m.–5.00 p.m. on 11 September 1987. Admission by ticket (including lunch) £20; £15 for members

of the Biosocial Society and reduced rates for students on request. Cheques to be made out to Dr Macbeth (Conference). Applications: Dr Helen Macbeth, Secretary of Biosocial Society, Department of Social Studies, Oxford Polytechnic, Gipsy Lane, Headington, Oxford OX3 0BP.